DIRECTORIUM ASCETICUM;

OR,

GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

THE

DIRECTORIUM ASCETICUM;

OR,

GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

BY

JOHN BAPTIST SCARAMELLI, S.J.

WITH PREFACE

BY

HIS EMINENCE THE MOST REV.

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INTRODUCTION.

1. In order to attain to Christian perfection, the means which we have already pointed out in the preceding Section are not sufficient. To remove the obstacles in the way to so high an end, it is further necessary to supply the proximate dispositions for this work. In acquiring these supernatural and divine qualities, the same happens as is commonly observed in the generation of earthly substances; in which, over and above the removal of obstacles, it is necessary that certain qualities should be introduced which directly dispose the subject for the production of the new substance. Thus, if you wish to ignite a log of green wood, it is not enough to expel the humidity, the cold, and all the other opposing qualities; but it is necessary also to introduce an intense heat, to prepare the way for the entrance of the new substance, fire. Now, these proximate dispositions to perfection are the Moral Virtues, which rest upon the Cardinal Virtues as upon their basis and foundation. These are the divine qualities which more immediately prepare the way for, and introduce into our

hearts, the fire of the perfect love of God and of our neighbour, in which the whole essence of our perfection consists. The present Section, therefore, is the proper place in which to speak of these virtues, and to encourage the reader to acquire them in all their perfection.

2. But here may arise a grave objection, which declares the arrangement of the present work to be defective and imperfect. Of what other subject, the devout reader will say, but of the Moral Virtues were we speaking in the preceding Section? What means are there of removing those obstacles to perfection which arise from the external and the internal senses, from the fascination of exterior objects, and from our invisible enemies, unless we attend to the exercise of the Moral Virtues? How is it possible to curb the sense of Taste without practising Temperance or to regulate the use of the eyes without exercising Modesty? How can we overcome the passions of the interior sense without the practice of all those virtues that are opposed to the vices to which these passions incline us by their irregular movements? The same may be said of the other impediments of which we have been speaking. Finally, it may be urged, that if we speak in the present Section of the Moral Virtues, we shall be treating of the identical subject of which we have already treated; we shall mix up one part of the work with another, and, by a most blameworthy want of arrangement, throw together in confusion the different portions of our subject-matter.

3. The reader's objection would be well founded, if all the Moral Virtues belonged to the same order. But this is not so; for St. Thomas says, that although the Moral Virtues belong to the same species, they do not all possess the same quality. Some purify the soul, and others belong to the soul when already purified. The purifying virtues are of such a nature that they are exercised in the midst of the tumult of rebellious passions, and in face of the opposition of vices not yet completely subdued. And these exactly are the virtues of which we spoke in the preceding Section, in which we showed how we are to restrain the license of the senses, to abate the heat of our irregular passions, and to detach the disordered heart from injurious or dangerous objects. But these

imperfect virtues most certainly are not the ultimate dispositions for the perfect love of God, which takes root only in hearts full of calm and peace. The virtues of the purified soul are those alone which are free from every movement of passion, whence their acts are exercised in perfect peace. St. Thomas, speaking of the Cardinal Virtues, says, that Prudence attains to this perfect purity when it looks to God alone in every action; Temperance, when it is no longer subject to any earthly desire; Fortitude, when it is entirely free from every movement of irregular passion; Justice, when it is fixed in an unceasing union with the Divine Will.*

4. Here it is well to remark, that these virtues which belong to purified souls, may be taken either in a stricter and more exact, or in a laxer and wider, sense. If they are taken in the former sense, they are found only in the blessed souls in heaven, and on earth only in the most perfect soul of Jesus Christ, and in that of His holy Mother; for these were alone free from all rebellion of the senses, as the same holy Doctor teaches.† But if these purified virtues be taken in the second and wider sense, they are possessed by many persons who have made great progress in perfection; because, when understood in this sense, they do not require a total extinction of concupiscence, nor of all our disordered passions, but simply great mortification of them, so as to be but slightly, and very rarely moved by them, and to repress them with great facility—as the learned Cardinal Lauria‡ observes, very aptly for our subject—so that the practice of these virtues becomes easy, sweet and delightful.

5. It is of these virtues that we intend to speak in the present Section. We suppose that by the use of the methods and of the direction given in the preceding Section, the devout person has in a great degree mortified his senses and his disordered passions,

* Quædam vero sunt virtutes jam assequentium divinam similitudinem, quæ vocantur virtutes jam purgati animi: ita scilicet quod prudentia sola divina intueatur; temperantia terrenas cupiditates nesciat; fortitudo passiones ignoret; justitia cum divinâ mente perpetuo fœdere societur, eam scilicet imitando. 1, 2, quæst. 61, art. 65 in corp.

† Quas quidem virtutes dicimus esse beatorum, vel aliquorum in hâc vitâ perfectissimorum. Ubi supra.

‡ In 3 sent., tom. ii., disp. 35, art. 4.

and has already abated their heat by the exercise of the purgative virtues. We will now, therefore, proceed to speak of the moral virtues, which are to be exercised in peace and tranquillity, and without serious opposition from the contrary vices. We shall, therefore, consider the essence and the properties of these virtues, and propose the motives, the ways, and the means for acquiring them. We shall also give the cautions necessary for avoiding error in practising them, to the end that when they enter the soul they may, in quality of immediate dispositions, draw it to the perfect love of God and charity towards our neighbour. A pilot will never be able to reach the wished-for port amidst storms and in spite of contrary winds; but he will soon be able to repose if he sail on a smooth sea, with the sky all unclouded, and the winds favourable throughout the whole voyage. Thus also in the turmoil of the passions, and amidst the tempests of ill-regulated affections, whatever efforts a man may make, he can never come to repose with perfect love in the heart of God. But a soul confirmed in the calm exercise of these virtues will soon attain to that most desirable end.

6. Before going further, however, I wish to give Directors another hint, which is necessary for understanding the souls subject to their guidance. It is, that the virtues of which we shall treat in the present Section, and likewise in the one which follows, may grow to such a degree of excellence as to attain to heroism. Ancient history boasts of a great number of heroes, such as Hector, Alcides, Achilles, Fabricius, Fabius, Scipio, Regulus, Cato, Socrates, Plato, and Diogenes, with many others. But the truth is, that if we carefully consider their actions, we shall find that none of them ever acquired any heroic virtue. And this for two reasons:—First, because the virtuous acts which these men practised were commonly infected by some vice or defect; secondly, because one virtue cannot be possessed in a heroic degree, unless it be accompanied by all the other virtues. I do not say that all the other virtues must be possessed in a heroic degree, but, at least, they must be present in some low degree. But, I ask, who among the heathens ever gave entertainment in his heart to the whole venerable company of the virtues, considering that pagans were all defiled with various vices? Heroism is restricted to the Mar-

tyrs, to Confessors, and to some great servants of God. These, strengthened by the powerful assistance of divine grace, are able to raise themselves to this exalted mode of acting. But if the Director would wish to know in what this heroism consists, I say it is that glorious line of action by which a man, in the matter of some virtue, raises himself above the way of acting of other virtuous men, and in this respect makes himself like to God.*

7. This proposition agrees with the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. He says that man exists in a state intermediate between the superior and the inferior beings. Through his reason he shares the nature of the Angels, and through his senses he partakes of the nature of the brutes. Now, as some, by yielding too much to their sensual appetites, degrade themselves to such an extent, as in the end to make themselves like beasts; so others, by acting virtuously with more than human excellence, perfect their reason to such a degree, that at length they come to resemble the Angels, and other purely spiritual beings. And this, St. Thomas says, is heroic virtue, which has something divine about it, because it lies above the sphere of common and ordinary human virtue.†

8. This peculiar excellence, which is conspicuous both in the habit of heroic virtue and in its acts, generally arises from the difficulty of the action done; either because it is difficult in itself,—as it would be to lay down our life in honour of our holy faith, or to do a great service to one who has grievously injured us,—or because it is difficult on account of the attendant circumstances. Thus to visit the sick in the hospitals, and to help them by performing menial offices for them, is not of itself a very hard or difficult act of virtue, but it would be such in a king or a great

* Virtus heroica est ille virtutis gradus, perfectio, seu fulgor, et excellentia, quæ facit, ut homo circa materiam illius virtutis, supra communem aliorum hominum operandi modum operetur, et in hoc Deo similis sit. Lauria, in 3 lib. sent., tom. ii., disp. 32, n. 27.

† Considerandum est, quod est humana anima media inter superiores substantias, quibus communicat per intellectum, et animalia bruta, quibus communicat in sensitivis potentiis. Sicut ergo affectiones sensitivæ partis aliquando in homine corrumpuntur usque ad similitudinem bestiarum, ita etiam rationalis pars aliquando in homine perficitur, et formatur ultra communem modum humanæ perfectionis, quasi ad similitudinem substantiæ separatæ. Et hæc vocatur virtus divina, supra humanam virtutem, et communem.

monarch, who, laying aside his majesty, should condescend to perform these menial offices. Observe, however, that a virtuous act of this nature, in order that it may acquire the character of heroism from the difficulty experienced in practising it, ought to be performed with ease and promptitude, and, if possible, even with pleasure; for slowness in doing good does not add lustre to our actions, but makes them imperfect. I have now said enough to enable the Director to discern in what degree the virtues of which we have spoken are possessed by his penitents, and he will be able to form a correct judgment concerning them.

9. In conclusion, I beg the reader to call to mind what I said at the very beginning of this Directory,—that whatever I have laid down methodically in the course of the various Sections, Articles, and Chapters, does not take place in the soul in the same order as to matter and time, but all the parts of the work go on at the same time. By the same act by which a devout person takes means to procure his perfection, he also is gradually removing the obstacles to that perfection, and he is refining his virtues by the removal of impediments; while by purifying his virtues in this manner he is acquiring charity. And no sooner has he obtained those virtues which are called the virtues of the purified soul, than he finds himself fully disposed to receive perfect charity, which is his perfection. All these things, therefore, take place at one and at the same time, but they cannot all be explained at the same time, nor in a single discourse. I would add, that this same charity, which is the end of the spiritual life, is likewise the means to that end; for when the love of God begins to enter the soul, the means for the acquirement of perfection are put in use with greater effect, the obstacles to it are more quickly removed, the virtues more thoroughly purified, and a forward step is taken in fervour and in the purest love of God. Thus charity, which is the essence of our perfection, is also the means whereby to ascend to a still higher degree of perfection.

ARTICLE I.

Prudence the first of the Cardinal Virtues.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHAT THE ESSENCE OF PRUDENCE CONSISTS, AND OF THE VICES CONTRARY TO IT.

10. THE first place among the Cardinal Virtues is due to Prudence; for this is the rule of all the other virtues, and lends lustre to them all, by regulating them aright. It is defined by Aristotle, "The right rule of practical conduct;"* and by St. Augustine it is said to be "The knowledge of what to seek and avoid."† And we may describe it according to the mind of both authors, by saying that it is a virtue of the intellect, which points out what ought to be done, and what ought to be left undone, in each particular business or action, in order to act aright. Prudence therefore is not, as are the other Moral Virtues, a virtue of the will, which is moved by the love of some one peculiar moral excellence; but it is a virtue of the intellect, which directs all the other virtues, inasmuch as it seeks out the means, and considers the circumstances, which ought to attend the practice of every single act of virtue. It judges which are the most fitting amongst the various means and circumstances. Finally, it gives the command to the will; or, to speak more accurately, as I shall explain directly, it moves the will to put into execution the virtuous act,

* Recta ratio agendorum.

† Esse rerum appetendarum et fugiendarum scientiam. Lib. 83 QQ. q. 30.

with those means and circumstances which it has judged to be suitable. Thus the act of virtue, when regulated by prudence, is performed with due perfection. In all this we must understand that prudence is always concerned with particular actions which have to be undertaken; for that man is not prudent who knows only in a general way, how to conduct himself in order to act aright. That person, on the other hand, certainly does deserve the name who, in the particular cases which come before him, knows how to regulate his actions in such a way that they can be squared with the rule of right reason.

11. Hence it follows, according to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, that in prudence three parts are contained. First, The discovery of means for the perfect performance of the act, and this he calls Counsel. Secondly, A correct judgment about the fitness of the means to be employed, according to the nature of present circumstances. To this he gives the name of Judgment. Thirdly, A command imposed upon the reason to apply the will to perform the act in the manner in which the reason has judged that it ought to be performed. Observe, however, with Lessius, that this command is not distinct from the reason itself, but by it the same faculty of reason moves and bends the will, not irresistibly, but gently, to act in conformity with the means and circumstances which it has judged to be conducive to the success of the act. I say this, because there have been some theologians who have imagined this command to be distinct from the reason, and, what is more important, have represented it as so powerful that the will can in no way withdraw from it, but must of necessity obey. The opinion can by no means be admitted, as it is prejudicial to the freedom of the human will; for a command of this nature, like an indissoluble bond, chains up the will, and deprives it of liberty of action.* Let me now give a practical

* Cujus quidem (nempe prudentiæ) sunt tres actus: quorum primus est consiliari, quod pertinet ad inventionem: nam consiliari est quærere, ut supra dictum est. Secundus est judicare de inventis, et hoc facit speculativa ratio. Sed practica ratio, quæ ordinatur ad opus, procedit ulterius; et est actus ejus præcipere, qui quidem actus consistit in applicatione consiliatorum, et iudica-

illustration by which to explain the doctrine which I have been setting forth in the abstract. Let me suppose that a man wishes to bring back to God a soul that has gone astray. In the first place, if he makes up his mind to do this work for the sake of repairing the divine honour which is outraged by the sinner, he will perform an act of Zeal. But if he determine to do it for the spiritual good of the unhappy man, whom he sees hurrying to his ruin along the paths of vice, he will exercise an act of Charity to his neighbour; and, at the same time, will be encouraged by these two virtues, Zeal and Charity, to go about the work of converting the wanderer. In a case of this nature, if he wishes to act with perfection, he must call in the aid of the virtue of prudence, in order to ensure right order having the direction of his act of zeal and charity. Then prudence, in conformity with her laws, will begin to seek out suitable means for bringing about the conversion of the sinner; such means, for instance, as to exhort him with sweetness, or to reproach him with severity · to get others to correct him sharply or affectionately; or, perhaps, to lead him dexterously to hear sermons, to read some pious book, or to go to Confession to some learned and zealous Priest; or, again, to induce those who have authority over him to punish him for his faults, in order that chastisement may make him more careful; or, in short, to take other means to obtain his object. Now, the seeking out of the means which conduce to the end, the Angel of the Schools styles Counsel, which is the first part of prudence. It is also the province of counsel to consider whether the present circumstances of time, place, and personal character are suitable for bringing about the conversion of the sinner. These investigations having been made, prudence proceeds to judge, by the help of the reason, which among so many means are the most suitable, or, in other words, which, more than all others (taking into account the present indisposition and character of the person, and the present circumstances of time and place), will lead most surely to the desired end. St. Thomas calls this Judgment, which is the second part of prudence. Finally, prudence, still using

torum ad operandum. Et quia ipse actus est propinquior fini rationis, ideo est principalis actus rationis practicæ, et per consequens prudentiæ.

the reason as its instrument, gives a command by which the will is not forced, but merely moved, to execute the act. The act, in the instance before us, is to procure the conversion of the sinner of whom we have been speaking, by the means which have been selected as the most fitting. This command, as I have said, is not distinct from the judgment, because in substance it is nothing but an act of the reason, by which that faculty, after taking everything into consideration, judges this to be the course of action proper to take. Now, this command reduced to practice, is the third and principal part of prudence, according to the Angelic Doctor.

12. To these three essential parts, St. Thomas* adds the respective integral parts which render prudence perfect in its kind. And from this combination a most perfect regulating of action results. The integral parts are eight in number :—Memory, Intelligence, Docility, Skill, Reason, Foresight, Circumspection, and Wariness. Five of these belong to Counsel, the sixth to Judgment, and the two last to the Executive Command. We will proceed to explain briefly each of these parts.

13. In the first place, Memory and Intelligence belong to Counsel, because to discover the means proper for securing the object in view, it is necessary to remember the means which we used on former occasions; and it is necessary also to know and understand the state of the present case, so as to see whether the means which we took on other occasions are suitable also in the instance before us. "A wise and prudent man," St. Ambrose says, "before speaking will consider what he ought to say, to whom he ought to say it, in what place and at what time; and calling to mind the good or evil result which similar words have had on other occasions, he will select those which are fitting for the end that he has in view."†

14. Docility is an integral part of counsel, and it helps greatly to the discovery of the means. This is a virtue which seeks to learn from books or from wise persons how to act aright. The

* 2, 2, quæst. 48, art. unic.

† Sapiens, ut loquatur, multa prius considerat, quid dicat, cui dicat, quo in loco, quo tempore. Lib. i., De Offic., cap. 10.

Holy Spirit often admonishes us in the Scripture not to rely upon our own prudence, but to be docile in taking the advice of others. The Apostle says, *Be not wise in your own conceits.** Solomon teaches this lesson in his Proverbs,† *But if you are wise, freely take counsel of others.*‡ *Never undertake any work without having received mature counsel from wise persons.*§ St. John Chrysostom shows how necessary is this docility, in order to act wisely, by a famous incident related in the history of the great prophet Moses. He entered the desert, along with six hundred thousand of the children of Israel, in quest of the Land of Promise. Besides being the guide of this great multitude of people, he was also their judge and, unaided, had to settle the disputes which arose among them. When his father-in-law, a rude and ignorant man, reproved Moses for this, and advised him to choose others to assist him in judging causes since he was not able to settle them all himself, the Prophet, with true docility, not only listened willingly to the advice but, following it promptly, appointed several judges as his colleagues in hearing the lawsuits of the people, and gave them authority to pass sentence. From this fact of sacred history the holy Doctor infers how proper it is for all to be docile and disposed to take counsel from others, seeing that there is no man, however elevated his understanding, even though he be another Moses, who is not ignorant of something which is well known to people of a humble position.‖

15. Another integral part of counsel is Skill. By skill is understood a true conjecture as to the means which will lead to the proposed end. Then, again, there is Foresight, which is a previ-

* Nolite prudentes esse apud vosmetipsos. Ad Rom. xij. 16.

† Ne innitaris prudentiæ tuæ. Prov. iij. 5.

‡ Qui sapiens est, audit consilia. Prov. xij. 14.

§ Fili, sine consilio nihil facias. Ecclus. xxxij. 24.

‖ Consiliariis omnes opus habent; etiamsi Moysi conferri possint. Multa enim sunt, quæ magni, et admirabiles viri ignorant, quæ parvi abjectique scire solent. Nam postquam Moyses ex Ægypto exiit, et in solitudinem venit: præfuit sexcentorum millium populo, et solus omnium contendentium lites dijudicavit; quod ut vidit socer ejus Jethro, homo alioqui barbarus, et insipiens (nihil enim gentilibus est insipientius) eum correxit, non curans, quod sapiens esset Dei amicus. Ille vere sapiens, ille myriadum dux, omni mansuetudine cum dicentem audivit, et consilio acquievit. Hom. 9, De Laud. Pauli.

sion of the future consequences which will probably follow on our act. The result of this last-named virtue is, that the person looking to the good or ill success of his own affairs will, by the light of his mind, form an opinion as to what means are fitting and what unsuitable for the attainment of his end. Everybody must see how necessary this virtue is to counsel; for without being able to calculate well beforehand, it is impossible to avoid mistakes in the seeking out of the means suitable for the attainment of the end. Thomas of Cantipré relates an anecdote which will illustrate this truth very well.* A king who was walking in a city, entered a square in which a market was being held on that day. While he was standing looking at the variety of the merchandise and the concourse of the purchasers, he saw a man with a white beard and of a grave aspect. This man was seated amongst those who were selling their wares; and the king asked him who he was, and what he was exposing for sale? He answered that he was a philosopher, and that the merchandise which he had in stock was prudence. The king smiled at the answer, and replied, "I stand in great need of this very article, intrusted as I am, though still a youth, with the government of so many subjects. If, then, you can sell me prudence, I will gladly give you a hundred marks of gold." Upon this the philosopher said, "I will give you a maxim by means of which you may rule yourself and your people with prudence. Never speak, never begin any undertaking, without having calculated, in advance, the result of your every word and every action."† This maxim pleased the king so much, that he ordered the money to be paid down immediately. He then caused the maxim to be sculptured over all the gates and windows of the royal palace, had it engraved upon all his silver and gold plate, and embroidered upon all the silks which he used, that he might have it always before his eyes. Owing to this prevision and good habit of forecast, the king never erred in the use of means, and he was enabled to rule himself and his kingdom with great prudence. So true is it that skill, in foreseeing and in cal-

* Apum, lib. ij., cap. 43.

† Temere nihil loquaris, nihil attentes, nisi prius cogites quid sequatur.

culating beforehand, helps very much to the perfection of counsel. We have shown, then, that memory, intelligence, docility, and skill belong, as integral parts, to counsel, while this is an essential part of prudence. Memory helps to the discovery of means by the remembrance of what has occurred on former occasions and at other times. Intelligence aids by an intimate knowledge of the present state of the matter in hand. Docility assists by taking either the written or the spoken advice of others. Skill is of use when it foresees the happy or unsuccessful issue of the action in question. The two last-mentioned parts, however, are the most important, and the most conducive to the good regulation of our own or others' actions.

16. Let us now go on to the other constituent of prudence, which is Judgment. St. Thomas calls Reason an integral part of judgment, because this latter is the faculty which, among many means suitable for the attainment of an end, determines speculatively which is the most suitable; while it is the province of reason alone to judge of the opportuneness of the matter in hand. The more so, because a means may at first sight appear the fittest, and in practice may not be so; or, again, it may appear the most unsuitable means, and yet may be in reality the most suitable of all. It is, therefore, necessary that the reason should have a part in the act of judging, in order to discover by the light of nature in human matters and by the divine light in supernatural things, the true bearing and fitness of the means, and in order to form a correct judgment in particular cases. This can be shown by many examples taken from the lives of the saints. I will choose one which seems to me suitable for the purpose. A lonely place was infested by a band of robbers, under a cruel captain, who were always on the watch for opportunities of taking the property and the lives of those who journeyed along the high road. A holy Abbot, seeing the abandoned life of this cruel man, determined to bring him to repentance for his grievous excesses, and to put him on the way of eternal salvation. He accordingly set himself to think of what means he should make use, in order to secure his object; and he settled upon a plan, which at first sight seemed most unsuitable. He mounted on horseback, and set out for the place where the

bloodthirsty ruffians lay concealed. No sooner did he draw near to the spot, than he was stopped by the robbers, and taken before their captain. When in his presence, the Abbot asked him what he wanted with him? "I want," he said, "your horse and your clothes." "Take them, then," replied the monk; "it is only proper that, as I have made use of them, so you also should use them. But tell me, I pray you," he continued, "what you do with all the clothes which you tear from the backs of miserable travellers?" "I sell them," replied the robber-chief, "in order to procure for myself all that I need for my support." "If this be so," replied the Abbot, "give up this cruel way of life, and I will provide you with food and clothing, bed, house, and everything else." The robber laughed at this offer, and said, "I do not feel inclined to live on beans and water, as you monks do!" "No," rejoined the Abbot; "I promise you, that if you will come with me, I will provide you with most excellent meat and fish, choice wines, delicious white bread, a soft bed, and elegant clothes." The robber was delighted with these generous offers, and on these conditions consented to go with the Abbot. Arrived at the monastery, the servant of God gave him a monk for his attendant, caused a very soft bed to be prepared, had an excellent suit of clothes made for him, and then had the most delicate dishes set on the table which could be procured in the country. But whilst the robber was feasting sumptuously, the monk in attendance sat on the ground, and took nothing but bread and water. The brigand wondered at seeing such austerity of life, and thinking that the monk did this in atonement for enormous crimes which he had committed, asked him one day whether he had committed murder? whether he had been guilty of many robberies? and whether he had led a depraved, lascivious, and libertine life? "God forbid," replied the monk, "that I should ever have fallen into such crimes!" "Then," said the other, "why do such severe penance?" The monk answered, "In order to render God propitious to me at the hour of my death." The robber's heart was deeply moved by these words and, with a sigh, he said to himself, "Wretched man that I am! I have committed so many murders, robberies, adulteries, and sacrileges, and yet I have never once observed a

fast. How, then, can I expect God to have mercy on me?" Grieved at this thought, he ran to throw himself at the feet of the Abbot, declaring with floods of tears that he too wished to do penance. And he really did penance, and surpassed all the monks in the severity of his mortifications. Let the reader here reflect, that the ordinary means for converting an abandoned sinner, such as this man certainly was, are to move him by the fear of chastisements, present and to come; to exhort him to penance, to fasting, and to an austere manner of life. And yet reason, enlightened by a heavenly light, induced this holy Abbot to make use of luxury, of delicacy, and of pleasures; and, as we have seen, with very happy results. Hence we may clearly conclude, that in order to form a correct judgment as to the means which ought to be made use of for obtaining success in any affair, the assistance of reason is necessary to point out, either by the help of natural light, or by supernatural illumination, what in particular cases are the most suitable means, according to the peculiar nature of the work to be accomplished.

17. Finally, to the third essential part of prudence, which is the executive command of the action, two integral parts belong, namely, Circumspection and Wariness. Circumspection is due consideration, which must exist in order that the means determined upon may be well suited to the end. Thus the intellect, provided with means by good counsel, and furnished by correct judgment with the most suitable among these means, proceeds to command the will to put the intended action into execution. This, however, is effected by a command which does not force, but merely persuades the will, and moves it to put into execution whatever it has judged ought to be done in the present circumstances. And this is to act with prudence, and in conformity with the rule of right reason.

18. It must, however, be observed, that prudence takes various names, according to the various matters which it directs. If it takes in hand the regulating of our own actions, it is called Solitary Prudence; if of the actions of others, it is styled Governing Prudence. This last again admits of further subdivision. If it is concerned with the good government of a family, it is called Eco-

nomic Prudence; if of a city, it is named Political Prudence. If it has to do with regulating military matters, it goes by the name of Military Prudence; if with the good government of a religious community, it is styled Monastic Prudence. But the matter of which we are now treating requires us especially to notice the distinction between natural and supernatural prudence. If prudence looks to human actions, according to a certain natural rectitude which shines in them, and which may be seen by the light of nature, the prudence is natural, and is that prudence which the heathen philosophers possessed, and which frequently is found in persons who do not enjoy the light of faith. If prudence is concerned with human actions, seen in the light of faith, inasmuch as they lead to God and to the attainment of eternal happiness, it is supernatural and divine. And this is the prudence of which we are speaking throughout this work, as being directive of all the supernatural and meritorious virtues which sanctify the soul.

19. Having now explained the substance of the virtue of prudence, and set forth its essential a d integral parts, let us go on to study what are the faults most frequently committed against this virtue. There are various failings which render our deliberations imprudent. In some of these we err by defect, in others by excess. We fail by defect through Precipitation, Inconsiderateness, Inconstancy, and Negligence. Precipitation is opposed to counsel when a person is too hasty in tracing out the means which are thought expedient; whence it follows that, by being too hurried, he becomes improvident through not finding out means suitable to the emergency. St. Gregory, blaming this want of prudence, says, that inconsiderateness is against judgment, when we deliberate without reflection about the means which ought to be taken.* Mature deliberation is required in those things which have to be settled once for all.† Inconstancy and negligence are opposed to practical and executive judgment; when a person, from frivolous reasons, and without just cause, changes a correct judgment, or when he delays to put it into

* In summis rebus citum non oportet esse consilium. Regist., lib. ij., Ep. 6, De Eligendo Paulo Episc.

† Deliberandum est, quod statuendum est semel. Ethic., cap. 9.

execution through sloth or negligence. On this account Aristotle again warns us that it is necessary to carry out promptly what we have determined to execute, after mature counsel.* To the end, then, that the act of prudence may be performed without imperfection, we must begin in good time to search out means conducive to the success of our affairs; we must, after mature deliberation, select the most suitable among these means; and we must not, through inconstancy, change the resolutions which we have already formed, nor, without just cause, delay coming to some determination.

20. According to the Angelic Doctor, faults against prudence are committed by excess, in six ways; by Carnal Prudence, by Cunning, by Guile, by Deceit, by Solicitude about temporal things, and by Solicitude about things in the future. Carnal prudence is that which looks to the regulation of works of the flesh, and determines the means to the attainment of what is in accordance with corrupt nature. This is a vile sort of prudence. Thus even a bandit, who discovers means fitted to secure success in his rapines, is a prudent robber, guided by a disgraceful prudence. So, too, a dissolute young man, who lays snares against the virtue of women, calculated to cause them to fall into sin, is a prudent libertine, but his prudence is his shame. And this is precisely the carnal prudence of which the Apostle speaks when he says that it is an enemy of God, and kills the soul with eternal death.† Cunning is a species of carnal prudence, and consists in this, that a person finds out secret means to deceive his neighbour. The Apostle calls this an infamy which every Christian ought to banish far from him.‡ St. Augustine says, that whereas all the vices bear some resemblance to virtue, cunning has some appearance of prudence, but is in reality a vice.§

21. Guile is cunning put into execution, and it gives efficacy to those secret means which cunning has predetermined. These

* Cito agendum esse, quæ consultaveritis. In vj. De Moribus, cap. 9.

† Prudentia carnis mors est; prudentia autem spiritûs vita, et pax, quoniam prudentia carnis inimica est Deo. Ad Rom. viij. 6.

‡ Abjiciamus occulta dedecoris, non ambulantes in astutiâ. II. Cor. iv. 2.

§ Omnibus virtutibus quædam vitia esse similia, sicut astutia prudentiæ similis est, quæ tamen est vitium. Lib. iv., Contra Julian., cap. 3.

means consist in lying words and deceitful acts. It is related in the Book of Machabees that Antiochus spoke peaceful words to the people of Israel with guile,* because his words showed peace, but in his cruel heart he intended war and slaughter. Fraud also is cunning put into execution, but by deceitful acts alone. Thus Job, when chiding his friends, said, *Shall God be deceived as a man with your deceitful dealings?*†

22. Solicitude about temporal things is a too great application of the mind to heaping up or preserving earthly goods. It springs from an inordinate attachment to the perishable goods of this world, and from an excessive fear of losing them. Solicitude about things future is an overweening occupation of the mind in what is to come, joined with anxiety and want of sufficient trust in Divine Providence; for instance, a solicitude lest we may come to want anything which is necessary or convenient with regard to food or clothing, or anything connected with our employment. Observe, however, that a moderate care about things present, and a moderate concern for providing for things in the future, is neither blameworthy nor contrary to the virtue of prudence. The Holy Spirit exhorts us to this kind of solicitude, and tells us to learn it from the ants which, in the heat of the summer, are solicitous to gather into their subterranean garner the provisions necessary for their support during the coming winter.‡ And the reason of this advice is, that God does not wish to provide us with what is necessary for our maintenance without some effort on our part. On the contrary, He wills that we procure it for ourselves by our industry, that so we may not lie down in listless idleness, which is the root of all evil.

23. Then only ought solicitude about the present and about the future to be looked upon as contrary to prudence, and be considered faulty, when it is immoderate. It is of this excessive solicitude our Divine Redeemer says, that it completely clogs the soul, and, after the manner of thickly-grown thorns, chokes the

* Et locutus est ad eos verba pacifica cum dolo. I. Mac. i. 31.

† Numquid, decipietur ut homo, vestris fraudulentiis. Job xiij. 9.

‡ Vade ad formicam, O piger, et considera vias ejus, et disce sapientiam; quæ cum non habeat ducem, nec præceptorem, et principem, parat in æstate cibum et congregat in messe quod comedat. Prov. vj. 6.

good seed of the householder;* that is to say, it dissipates good thoughts, extinguishes the fire of holy affections, altogether alienates the soul from heaven, and causes it to be entirely plunged in the cares of this miserable earth. We may then conclude that, although all the faults which we have now mentioned bear a certain resemblance to prudence, yet they are not true prudence; they are rather so many blemishes which tarnish the brightness of this beautiful virtue. The virtue of prudence seeks out the means which lead by a lawful way to a good end; it chooses from among these means such as are most suitable to this end; and puts them into execution with proper constancy and promptitude, by giving a command to the will; not, however, forcing it, but exciting and moving it to the performance of the action. If the means be directed to a holy end, that is, to God and to eternal happiness, this virtue will be not only naturally good, but supernaturally holy: and it is prudence of this sort of which we are treating at present.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF PRUDENCE.

24. How important Prudence is for acquiring Christian perfection may be deduced from the fact that, without this virtue, there cannot be any virtue at all; because prudence must necessarily co-operate with and assist all other virtues in their proper acts, as St. Thomas declares.† Hence we may say that prudence is the full complement and perfection of all the virtues and, so to speak, a light which imparts to each of them its own peculiar lustre of goodness and beauty, as the same Saint remarks.‡ St.

* Dico vobis, ne solliciti sitis animæ vestræ quid manducetis, neque corpori vestro quid induamini. Matth. vj. 25.

† Ex hâc ratione habetur, quod prudentia adjuvat omnes virtutes, et in omnibus operatur. 2, 2, q. 47, art. 5 ad 2.

‡ Dicendum, quod prudentia est completiva omnium virtutum moralium. 2, 2, q. 166, art. 2 ad 1.

Ambrose well compares prudence to a clear spring; because, just as a spring gives nourishment and beauty to flowers, so prudence, by means of its pure counsels and wise determinations, imparts to all the flowers of the Moral Virtues whatever beauty or value they may possess.* The Saint shows this by instancing one illustrious virtue, which holds the second place among the Cardinal Virtues —I mean Justice. He says that justice cannot exist without prudence, seeing that the mere decision whether a thing is just or unjust, is an act of no common prudence.†

25. The reason of this is manifest; for virtue consists in keeping midway between two contrary vicious extremes, the one of defect, the other of excess. Thus, the virtue of liberality is of such a character that it knows how to keep the mean between prodigality and avarice without inclining to one side or the other; since, by inclining to either side, it at once loses all the brightness of virtue and begins to be tarnished by spots of vice. Thus he who makes use of his riches to give too freely, is not liberal, but prodigal. He only is virtuously liberal who, in the use he makes of his own wealth, knows how to take a middle course, so as, on the one hand, not to give too much, and, on the other, not to be niggardly. Now, the office of prudence is precisely to prescribe to all the other virtues the most suitable means for keeping themselves within the bounds of moderation, in which moderation consists all their beauty, goodness, and value. Moreover, no action can be called virtuous if it be not performed with the proper circumstances of time and place, and by the proper person. But a virtue which is deprived of prudence must of necessity err as regards the opportuneness of such circumstances; inasmuch as it is the province of prudence sagaciously to discern and judge the fitness of these circumstances.

26. St. Basil, therefore, says truly, that a man devoid of prudence is like a ship without a pilot; because, as a ship without a pilot

* Primus officii fons est prudentia, qui tamen fons et in virtutes derivatur ceteras.

† Neque enim potest justitia sine prudentiâ esse: cum examinare, quid justum, quidve injustum sit, non mediocris prudentia est. Lib. i., Offic., cap. 27.

cannot sail direct for the wished-for port, but is driven hither and thither by the fury of the winds, and is borne helplessly along to be at length dashed against the rocks, so too a soul devoid of prudence knows not how to keep to the middle course (which is the only right course, as it alone leads to virtue), but is carried by indiscretion now to one extreme, now to another, and is at length dashed against the rock of some vice.* For this reason the holy Doctor earnestly inculcates upon his Religious the necessity of never undertaking any work without having previously considered the matter with mature prudence; for, as he sagely remarks to them, "There is no action so good as not to become vicious when performed imprudently, that is at an improper time or without due moderation.† But on the other hand," he goes on to state, "it is incredible what lustre every good action, performed at the proper time and in the proper place, receives from prudence, and how advantageous it proves both to one's self and to others."‡

27. The story is well known which Cassian relates in the Second Conference of the Abbot Moses, about the decision which the great St. Antony gave upon the matter of which we are speaking. Many monks had come to the Saint from various parts of the Thebais, in order to settle which was that virtue by the help whereof a monk might climb straight and with security to the topmost heights of perfection. Owing to the variety of opinions on the subject, the spiritual conference lasted from evening till the break of day. Some thought austerity of life, with constant watchings and fasts, to be the most necessary virtue; because, as they said, when the body is emaciated and the soul is purified by these mortifications, it will be easy for the person to

* Haud absurde homo consilii expers, similis censetur navigio rectore carente, quodque ventorum impetu huc, illucque impellitur. Orat. 21, De Felicitate.

† In omni quæ suscipitur actione antecedere prudentia debet. Nam prudentiâ remotâ, nihil cujusvis generis est, quod licet bonum videatur, non in vitium recidat, si aut alieno tempore, aut non adhibitâ moderatione fiat.

‡ Ratio verò et prudentia ubi rebus bonis idoneum tempus ac modum definiunt, mirabile est, quantum ex eorum usu, cum in dantes, tum in accipientes, fructus redundet. Idem, In Constit. Monast., cap. 15.

be united with God. Others judged the perfect contempt of all earthly things to be of still greater importance; because, ties of this nature being broken, the soul can freely and without impediment fly to God. Others were of opinion that solitude was the most efficacious, seeing that from living always alone with God, the soul can easily bind itself to Him with the bonds of divine love. Others again thought that charity was the most necessary of all the virtues; and these relied upon the authority of the gospel, where Christ promises the Kingdom of Heaven to the man who is much practised in works of mercy.* Others, in fine, exalted different virtues, according to their divers spiritual instincts and inclinations. Meanwhile, almost the whole night having been spent in these discussions, the great St. Antony arose, and while all the others kept silence, he began to speak thus:—"All that you have said is useful, and necessary to those who wish to draw near to God and to be united to Him; but the innumerable falls of many who have walked by the way of the virtues just enumerated, do not admit of our giving to any one of these virtues the first place, or of our thinking that one alone to be the safest and the most necessary among the virtues.† How many persons have we ourselves seen emaciated by fasts and watchings, in deserts far removed from all human intercourse, stripped of all earthly goods, in most rigid poverty, much given in excess to works of charity: how many such have we seen disgrace these fervent beginnings by an unhappy and doleful end! In order, therefore, to understand what is the chief virtue which leads with all security to God, it will be well to examine what was the origin of the ruin of these fervent and virtuous men. Most assuredly no other can be found than indiscretion and imprudence, on account of which they did not know how to keep to the middle course which is the path of virtue, and went to one extreme

* Esurivi enim, et dedistis mihi manducare; sitivi, et dedistis mihi bibere, etc. Matth. xxv. 35.

† Omnia quidem hæc quæ dixistis, necessaria sunt, et utilia sitientibus Deum, atque ad eum cupientibus pervenire, sed his principalem tribuere gratiam nequaquam nos innumeri multorum casus, et experimenta permittunt, etc. Collat. ij., cap. 2.

by excess, or to the other by defect. This is the reason why Penance, Solitude, Detachment, Charity, and all the other virtues, imprudently practised, in place of leading these men to perfection and to God, miserably carried them over the precipice. It follows, then," the holy Abbot went on to say, "that discretion or prudence is the chief among the virtues. This is the eye of which Christ spoke, *If it be single and pure, the whole body will be lightsome; but if it be evil and corrupt, the whole body will be darksome.** For if the eye of prudence is purified, and knows how to discern what ought to be done and what ought to be left undone in order to act according to right reason, the whole man will be adorned with bright actions. But if the eye of prudence be injured by indiscretions and imprudences, the whole man will be overshadowed by the darkness of vicious actions." Finally, after St. Antony had confirmed his teaching by relating various cases which had recently happened, Cassian says that the Saint and the whole of that pious assembly came to the conclusion that discretion, or prudence, is the virtue which leads securely to God, which regulates and preserves all the other virtues, enabling us to climb with facility to the heights of the most consummate perfection.†

28. All this teaching of the great St. Antony is expressed in a few words by St. Bernard. Speaking of discretion, otherwise called prudence, he says: "This virtue regulates all the virtues; it imparts to them moderation, brightness, and stability. Prudence is not so much a single virtue as a director and guide of all the virtues; it regulates the affections, and is the master of habits. Deprive a man of prudence and all his virtues will forthwith become so many vices."‡ Beautiful words! Words which show of

* Lucerna corporis tui, est oculus tuus. Si oculus tuus simplex fuerit, totum corpus tuum lucidum erit. Si autem oculus tuus fuerit nequam, totum corpus tuum tenebrosum erit. Matth. v. 22, 23.

† Tam beati Antonii, quam universorum sententiâ definitum est, discretionem esse quæ fixo gradu intrepidum hominem perducat ad Deum, prædictasque virtutes jugiter conservet illæsas, cum quâ ad consummationis excelsa fastigia, minore possit fatigatione conscendi. Collat. ij., cap. 4.

‡ Discretio omni virtuti ordinem ponit, ordo modum tribuit, et decorem etiam, et perpetuitatem. . . . Est ergo discretio non tam virtus, quam quæ-

how great importance is the possession of this virtue, not only as regards perfection, but also with reference to constancy in leading a Christian life. If prudence, in the opinion of the mellifluous Doctor, and of the saints whose words we have quoted above, gives order and moderation to all the virtues, then all they possess of goodness, beauty, splendour, or brightness is also to be attributed to the same. And while to perform even good actions without prudence is a continual disorder, it is also a ceaseless imperfection and vice. Therefore, to say that a Christian is prudent, is the same as to say that he is good and virtuous; and to affirm that a Christian is imprudent, is the same as affirming that he is imperfect and vicious. With reason, then, does the Wise Man call that person happy who is full of prudence, because he is richer than those who abound in refined silver and pure gold; while the fruits which he reaps from prudence are of greater value than those which come from the possession of material riches.* And Seneca attained, by the light of nature alone, to a knowledge of the blessedness which is hidden in prudence.†

CHAPTER III.

THE MEANS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF PRUDENCE.

29. THE first means to acquire prudence is to beg it of God. He has Himself declared that prudence is His own gift.‡ Whence holy David was constant in making this prayer, *Show me, O Lord, Thy ways;* that is, Show me how properly to perform the works of Thy service which lead me to Thee.§ Let the

dam moderatrix, et auriga virtutum, ordinatrixque affectuum, et morum doctrix. Tolle hanc, et virtus vitium erit. In Cant. Serm., 49.

* Beatus homo, qui invenit sapientiam, et qui affluit prudentiâ. Melior est acquisitio ejus negotiatione argenti, et auri primi; et purissimi fructus ejus. Prov. iij. 13, 14.

† Prudentia ad beatam vitam satis est. Epist. 85.

‡ Meum est consilium, et aequitas; mea est prudentia. Prov. viij. 14.

§ Vias tuas, Domine, demonstra mihi, et semitas tuas edoce me. Ps. xxiv. 4.

reader recall to mind the three essential parts of prudence, of which we have spoken above, and in the case of each of these he will perceive the necessity of our having recourse to God. Every one knows how much the divine light assists Counsel, and helps to the discovery of suitable means. This light has the property of disclosing hidden things to our minds; as much as material light has the property of rendering objects visible to our eye. Assuredly there is nothing which can secure us more from erring in judgment in the choice of the most suitable means than the light of God, which is brighter, more penetrating, and clearer than any other light; and which, better than all other lights, discloses the fitness of such means. As to the executive command, it is plain how necessary is the grace of God to strengthen the will, and to render it prompt in the execution of such means as have been judged most suitable for attaining the object. Prudence, says Cassian, is a great virtue, which cannot be acquired by industry, but must come from the liberal hand of God.* For this reason it was that Tobias, when teaching his son to walk in the path of virtue, inculcated upon him the necessity of constantly praying to God to direct his actions by the light of prudence.† Although, according to the teaching of that holy man, this ought to be done at all times, St. Augustine warns us that the advice should be put in practice particularly in cases where we find ourselves without counsel.‡ Just as the saintly King Josaphat, when he saw himself surrounded by an innumerable host of enemies, and felt that he stood in need of counsel, had recourse to God with great faith, saying, *Not knowing, O Lord, how we ought to act in these straits, we have no resource but to raise our eyes to Thee*, and to beg light not to err in the resolutions which we take.§

30. The second means to acquire prudence is, to keep the

* Est discretio, non mediocris quædam virtus, nec quæ humanâ passim valeat industriâ comprehendi, nisi divinâ fuerit largitate collata. Collat. i., cap. 1.

† Omni tempore benedic Deum, et pete ab eo, ut vias tuas dirigat. Tob. iv. 20.

‡ Ubi humanum deficit auxilium, illic intercedat divinum adjutorium. Serm. 68, De Temp.

§ Cum ignoremus quid agere debeamus, hoc solum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te. II. Paralip. xx. 12.

passions in subjection, and particularly those which incline us to the pleasures of the senses; as the Angelic Doctor teaches.* In the case of Susanna, the Elders, besides being in the decline of life, held the office of judges; and yet, as every one knows, they acted with the greatest imprudence, because they were the slaves of lust.† Samson, although God assisted him by the gift of unusual and prodigious strength, was so imprudent that the Philistines were able to put out his eyes as if he had been a feeble infant, and then condemned him to turn a mill like a beast of burden; and all this because he was infatuated by his inordinate love of a woman.‡ We read of the sons of Samuel, that they exercised their office with such imprudence and with so little correctness of judgment, that the Jewish people soon carried their complaint to the father of the young men, and refused to have them any longer for their judges. But why did these men lose sight of prudence in the exercise of their office, notwithstanding that they had the advantage of the excellent example and the wise maxims of their holy father? Because they allowed themselves to be blinded by the vice of avarice, and to be carried away by greediness after bribes.§. And hence, too, the Holy Spirit admonishes us in Exodus to beware of taking gifts, because the inordinate desire of receiving them blinds even the wisest and most prudent minds.‖

31. It is exactly in these words, *They blind the prudent*, that the whole reason lies of what we are now saying. Prudence is a virtue which is entirely founded upon reason; because it belongs to reason to find out proper means to judge of their fitness, and to determine to put them in execution. On the other hand, there is nothing which so clouds and even blinds the reason as dis-

* Delectatio maxime corrumpit æstimationem prudentiæ, et præcipue delectatio quæ est in venereis, quæ totam animam absorbet, et trahit ad sensibilem delectationem. Perfectio autem prudentiæ, et cujuslibet intellectualis virtutis consistit in abstractione a sensibilibus. 2, 2, q. 53, a. 9.

† Daniel. xiij.

‡ Judic. xvj.

§ Declinaverunt post avaritiam, acceperuntque munera, et perverterunt judicium. I. Reg. viij. 3.

‖ Nec accipies munera, quæ excæcant etiam prudentes. Exod. xxiij. 8.

ordered passions. For as clouds, rising from the earth and spreading in the air, obscure the beautiful light of the sun, so when the clouds of any irregular passions arise in the inferior part of man, they quickly dim the light of reason and of faith, and, consequently, the virtue of prudence is clogged in all its operations. Hence it follows, that amidst the turmoil of disordered appetites, a prudence which is positively bad may have the upper hand. Cunning and deceit, may have the mastery, because these have for mother the passions from which they derive their origin. Among these turbulent vices, however, the virtue of perfect prudence—of which we are at present treating—cannot subsist; because its nurse is reason, enlightened by the rays of faith.

32. The third means of acquiring prudence is to reflect upon the actions which we ourselves have already performed. Prudence is acquired by experience. But experience then alone has this noble effect, when a person is in the habit of looking forward to the result of his own actions; because it is only then that he learns practically which means are suitable and which unsuitable to attain now one end now another. Some learn how to regulate themselves from their first experiences; others do not get this knowledge even after having had experience about the same thing ten or twenty times. The reason of this is, that the former are in the habit of reflecting, while the course of the latter is blind and headlong. The frequent examination of our conscience is therefore very useful, because a man, seeing by this examination the ill success of his actions, learns what means are suitable to direct him in future, according to prudence and right reason. And this is one of the causes why the Holy Fathers so strongly recommend this devout exercise, from which, as from a pure fountain, flow streams of perfect prudence.*

33. The fourth means to acquire prudence is always to ask counsel of persons of sound judgment. We have already spoken

* Disce in cellâ secundum communis instituti leges tu tibi præesse, et vitam ordinare, et mores componere, et temetipsum judicare, te ipsum apud te ipsum accusare, sæpe etiam condemnare, nec impunitum dimittere. . . . Manè præteritæ noctis fac a te ipso exactionem, et venturæ diei tu tibi indicito cautionem. Vespere, diei præteritæ rationem exige, et supervenientis noctis fac indictionem. S. Bern. (vel alius) Ad Fratres de Monte Dei. Circa medium.

of this course when treating above of Docility, in so far as it is an integral part of counsel. But we will now proceed to speak of it as being a most important means, helping to the execution of all the requirements of prudence. In order in no way to err in the exercise of this virtue, the Wise Man warns us, *Do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done;** for by so doing you will have a proof that you have not acted imprudently. And in another place he says, *If thou wouldst not be deceived, treat always with the wise and prudent.*† Tobias also, when instructing his son about the virtue of prudence, gave him this maxim, *Before undertaking any work, ask counsel of some wise man.* Because, in truth, the first rule of prudence is not to rely upon our own prudence, but to trust in that of another rather than in our own.‡

34. The reason of this is, that however purified from passions our soul may be, it always retains a certain amount of self-love, which is inseparable from our corrupt nature; and this self-love, when the soul is called upon to give judgment about its own affairs, inclines it to choose what is advantageous and agreeable rather than to right conduct. But when any one has to give judgment in the case of another, it is more easy for him to form his judgment according to right reason, and in conformity with the rules of a just behaviour, seeing that he is not, with regard to his neighbour's business, at all prejudiced by those passions and that self-love which so often interfere with a correct appreciation of things. Wherefore, in our own cause, the counsel of another is always safer than our own opinion.

35. "It is, then, a great benefit," says St. Basil, speaking of this subject, "to have a prudent and kind counsellor, who may supply by his advice what is wanting to your prudence, as often as you ask his opinion."§ The Saint then goes on to show the

* Fili, sine consilio nihil facias, et post factum non pœnitebis. Ecclus. xxxij. 24.

† Cum sapientibus et prudentibus tracta. Ibid., ix. 21.

‡ Consilium semper a sapiente perquire. Tob. iv. 19.

§ Plane non exigui momenti beneficium est, quod a prudente, et benevolo consiliario emanat consilium: quippe qui suo adventu supplet quod desit prudentiæ, consilium de re quâpiam captantibus. In Isai., cap. i.

great benefit which results from taking such counsel, by the example of Moses—an example also adduced by St. John Chrysostom, whom we have quoted above. Although Moses was endowed with the wisdom of the Egyptians, and maintained such a special and familiar intercourse with God, yet he stood in need of counsel, and received timely counsel from his father-in-law, Jethro, creating judges to hear the causes of the people.* Finally, the holy Doctor concludes, in another place, "Great is the pride of that man who thinks that he stands not in need of the counsel of any one, who is satisfied with his own opinion, as though he alone were wise and never wanting in the best expedients in every event."†

36. St. Gregory, treating of this subject, relates in his Dialogues a terrible story about the deacon Paschasius, a man of extraordinary goodness of life. The Saint pronounced this memorable panegyric upon him: "Paschasius, a deacon of this Apostolic See, whose books, dictated by the Holy Spirit, are most correct and clear, and are still in circulation, was a man of wonderful sanctity. He was greatly devoted to almsgiving, was a lover of the poor, and had a great contempt of self."‡ The Saint next says, that while Paschasius lay dead upon the bier he worked miracles, instantaneously curing one possessed by the devil.§ Then the Pope, after having passed such high eulogiums upon Paschasius, which would have been enough to ground his canonisation as a saint, relates that the object of his eulogy appeared after death to Ger-

* Proinde quantum emolumenti obveniat ex accepto consilio, declarat vel maxime Moyses, qui omni sapientiâ Ægyptiorum eruditus, qui familiari colloquio cum Deo congrediebatur, perinde si quis amicus cum suo loquatur amico. Hic tantum consilium sibi redditum a Jethro socero suo accepit, nimirum ut tribunos millenarios constitueret.

† Superbia magna habetur, existimare si nullius egere consilio, ac sibi ipsi penitus acquiescere, quasi vel solus sapiat, et quam optima in medium consulere valeat. Idem., Ibid.

‡ Audivi, quod Paschasius hujus apostolicæ sedis diaconus, cujus apud nos rectissimi, et luculenti de Spiritu Sancto libri existunt, miræ sanctitatis vir fuerit, eleemosynarum maxime operibus vacans, cultor pauperum, contemptor sui. Dial., lib. iv., cap. 40.

§ Ejus dalmaticam feretro superpositam dæmoniacus tetigit, statimque sanatus est.

manus, Bishop of Capua, and begged for prayers, as he was in a state of purgation, for no other reason than that he had, at the election of Pope Symmachus, contrary to the common opinion, remained obstinate in his wish to have a certain Laurence elected as Roman Pontiff.* And, although he had not acted thus with malice, as the holy Doctor remarks, still he was constrained to suffer the penalty of his obstinacy. Let the reader, therefore, learn not to be tenacious of his own opinion, but readily to seek and yield to the counsel of others, since on this, in great measure, depends our acting with prudence and according to right reason. Thus we shall make sure of being blameless before God in our actions, and of not incurring any punishment.†

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO THE DIRECTOR CONCERNING PRUDENCE.

34. FIRST suggestion. The Director must be persuaded that prudence is the virtue which is peculiarly necessary for himself; for, as Aristotle says, the other virtues are common to those who are subject to the authority of another as well as to those who rule by their own authority, but prudence is peculiar to those who preside.‡ In order that your penitents and disciples may act with prudence, it is sufficient if they obey your counsel exactly. Nor is it necessary that they should examine into the reasons for acting in the manner prescribed to them; and they even act with greater prudence the less they look into the reasons of their actions: because it is not their office to inquire, but to execute. This is the very teaching which St. Jerome lays down for Rusti-

* Pro nullâ aliâ causâ in hoc pœnali loco deputatus sum, nisi quia in tempore Laurentii contra Symmachum sensi.

† Consilium semper a sapiente perquire.

‡ Prudentia propria virtus est præsidentis. Nam cæteræ quidem virtutes videntur communes tam eorum qui præsunt, quam eorum qui subsunt; at prudentia non est virtus ejus qui subsit. Ethic., art. iij., c. 3.

cus.* But this is not sufficient for us, because it is the duty of the Director to consider whether this or that action is suitable for his penitent; whether it be for his advantage to perform it in this manner or in that; at this time or at that; with such restriction or with such extension. Thus, therefore, all the burden of prudence rests upon the shoulders of the Director.

38. If, then, the Director has need more than any one else of this virtue, he more than any one else ought to put in practice the means of which we spoke in the last chapter; and this on account of the special care which he is bound to take in order to acquire it. Consequently the Director ought seriously to apply himself to the study of those things which belong to his ministry; and these are Moral, Ascetical, and Mystical Theology, which are adapted to the direction of all, according to the different dispositions of each. For this purpose, he ought to have ready at hand principles by which to regulate every soul which he undertakes to cultivate. He ought also, after he has given his counsel, to reflect whether he has acted conformably to the principles and doctrines which he has learnt; and, if he has erred in their application, he must take care to avoid such error in future. Thus he will acquire a practical, right, secure, and prudent method of conducting souls to God. Moreover, he should never begin to hear the confessions of his penitents without having previously, with great humility, asked God for His heavenly light.† In cases of doubt he should again elevate his mind to God, and beg of Him a ray of His light. In the more difficult and intricate cases, let him take time for prayer, and then prostrate himself before God. Let him say with Judith, "Strengthen in me, O Lord, the gift of counsel; enlighten my mind, that I may be able to disentangle the conscience of my disciple without implicating my own."‡

39. In the second place the Director must take care to keep

* Credas tibi salutare quidquid præpositus monasterii præceperit, nec de majorum sententiâ judices, cujus officii est obedire, et implere quæ jussa sunt, dicente Moyse: *Audi, Israel et tace.*

† Da mihi sedium tuarum assistricem sapientiam. . . . Quoniam servus tuus sum ego, et filius ancillæ tuæ, et homo infirmus, et exigui temporis, et minor ad intellectum judicii, et legum. Sap. ix. 4, 5.

‡ In corde meo, Domine, consilium corrobora. Judith. ix. 18.

his soul free from all passion. He must not bear too great an affection for any of his penitents of either sex, nor entertain an aversion to any of them; because these ill-regulated affections warp the mind's judgment, and give occasion to counsel which is not in conformity with right reason. Above all, he must be on his guard against human respect, because nothing so sways the judgment, and renders a man so inapt for declaring the truth as human respect. It is true that Counsel is an act of the intellect, by which that faculty judges what ought to be done in order to act according to right reason. But it often happens that the intellect follows the will, and if this is held in slavery by any paltry passions, the judgment is formed more according to affection than to reason. It is stated in the Annals of the Cistercian Order,* that when a certain Abbot was at the point of death, the monks began to deliberate about the election of his successor; as, however, they could not agree on the subject, they determined by common consent to leave the choice to the dying Abbot, knowing him to be a man of great prudence and probity. The Abbot at once chose a nephew of his own, whom he had brought up in the monastery, and shortly afterwards he calmly expired. While the nephew was standing one day in the garden, near a sparkling fountain, he heard a pitiful voice issuing from the depth of the water. He approached the edge of the basin, and said, "Who are you that lament in these refreshing waters?" "I am," he heard in answer, "The Abbot, your predecessor and your uncle, and I am suffering and agonising in this place." "But how can this be," replied the nephew, "seeing that your life, so religiously spent, deserves reward and not punishment?" "It is on your account," was the reply; "for when it was my duty to give counsel concerning the election of my successor, I was influenced by the affection I bore you more than by the zeal which I ought to have had for regular observance. And if you wish to assure yourself of the truth of what I say, bring here a brass candlestick, put it into this fountain, and you will see how hot and full of torment these waters are for me, which to you are so refreshing." This was done, and the metal candlestick, on coming

* Specul. Exempl., dist. 3, Excom. 43.

in contact with the water, instantly melted as though it had been a candlestick of wax. Observe that this Abbot, although—as the story here represents him—a man of great prudence and religious spirit, did not give good counsel, owing to his entertaining an affection in his heart, notwithstanding that he was then on the point of going to appear before the tribunal of God, there to render a strict account of all that he had done. And therefore, if the Director wishes to give prudent counsels to his disciples, let him keep his mind free from every passion.

40. In the third place, the Director must practise reflection. After he has exercised his ministry, either by giving rules or direction to his penitents, and by solving their doubts or hearing their Confessions, he should turn over in his mind the answers or the counsel which he has given, and the manner in which he has acted. Thus, knowing his own mistakes, he will gradually correct them, will acquire, little by little, a habit of prudence, and will give counsels according to reason with facility and security. Finally, let him be ready in seeking counsel himself, and particularly in doubtful cases. As he ought to prevail upon his penitents not to act without his counsel, so he ought not to act without the counsel of another; for, as his penitents may err by relying upon their own opinion, so may he go astray by trusting too much to his own lights. St. Paul relates of himself, that he went to Jerusalem to consult with some of the Apostles, and especially with St. Peter, with reference to the Evangelical doctrine which he was preaching to the Gentiles.* But what is still more to be admired, the Apostle took this step though he knew that he had received by divine revelation, from the mouth of Jesus Christ, the Gospel which he taught.† Notwithstanding this, he wished to take counsel of one who was greater than himself.‡ What a noble example is this for us! If the Doctor of the Gentiles, and the guide of the whole Church, wished to take counsel of others concerning a doc-

* Contuli cum illis evangelium, quod prædico in gentibus; seorsum autem his, qui videbantur aliquid esse: ne forte in vacuum currerem, aut cucurrissem. Ad Gal. ij. 2.

† Neque enim ego ab homine accepi illud, neque didici, sed per revelationem Jesu Christi. Ibid., i. 12.

‡ Ne forte in vacuum currerem, aut cucurrissem.

trine which he might so safely have promulgated, what Director can ever be unwilling to consult others with reference to his manner of guiding souls, concerning his own opinions and the doctrines which he holds, and particularly in the more perilous and difficult cases which occur from time to time?

41. Second suggestion. The Director must observe, that in order to treat his penitents wisely, it is necessary to be acquainted with the nature of their temperament, and to know how to adapt himself to their disposition. A carver must know the qualities of the various woods in which he wishes to work: that some are soft, some hard, some knotty, some easily split, and some apt to splinter; otherwise, being mistaken in the material, he will not be able to carry on his work. So, too, a spiritual director will not succeed in leading his penitents to Christian perfection, if he do not understand their different temperaments, and if he fail to adapt with great prudence his direction to the individual character of each one.

42. There are four temperaments, the Melancholic, the Phlegmatic, the Sanguine, and the Choleric. They correspond to the four elements, earth, water, air, fire, and thus they have the properties of these elements. Hence, from the qualities of the elements, we may easily arrive at a knowledge of the defects to which these temperaments are subject. Those of a melancholic temperament are like earth, heavy, sluggish, slothful, obstinate, tenacious of their own opinion; self-conscious, full of fancies, prone to suspect and judge the actions of others; gloomy, silent, lovers of solitude, reserved and backward in making known the sentiments of their hearts; little grateful for the kindness of others, sparing of praise, unwilling to show respect or do services, and when they do such, spoiling the effect by the bad grace with which they do them. In dealing with people of this temperament, the Director ought to be gentle, affable, cordial and kind in his manner, so as not to give occasion to their suspicions, but rather so to act that they may feel free to open out their hearts, to do which they are very averse. And since the perturbations to which these people are subject, and the various defects into which they fall, arise from their minds being fixed upon each successive thought,

he must see that they take the line of despising, and, in a way, thinking nothing of, all their internal troubles; because this is the best way to dissipate the phantasms of these gloomy souls. He must also procure their withdrawal from the too great solitude to which they are prone, occupying them in exterior employments and in works of mercy for the good of their neighbour, in order that their mind may not, to their detriment, be too much fixed, now upon one thing, now upon another.

43. The phlegmatic, like water—of the qualities of which they partake—are cold, they with difficulty are warmed towards good, they are slow in undertaking it, easily give it up, they are changeable, inconstant, faint-hearted, soon filled with fears, discouragement, and diffidence, they are free from strong passions, but they are also devoid of great virtues. The direction of persons of this temperament is not very easy; because, on the one hand, they must not be left to lie listless in their torpor, and, on the other, much pressure cannot be put upon them, as they are incapable of bearing it. It is not well to reprehend them sharply, because they are soon cast down; and yet they should sometimes be reprehended, in order that they may humble themselves, and not attribute to virtue a certain peace felt by them, which is merely natural. In fine, the Director must gradually suggest to such persons the exercises of piety and mortification which they ought to practise. According to the proverb, he must not heap too much wood upon the fire, otherwise he will only stifle that spark of good-will which glows within their hearts. He must stimulate their coldness, but must at the same time constantly accommodate himself to their sluggishness. In the regulation of their interior, maxims of love are best suited to these cold and timid characters, for such motives expand their hearts with hope and inflame them with holy affections. As regards external things, it is not expedient to intrust matters of great importance to them, because, owing to their sluggishness, nothing but a most miserable result can be expected.

44. The sanguine resemble the air; they are light in their manner, given to pleasure, to amusements, to enjoyment and to their own convenience. They easily become attached, and con-

tract friendships, and as easily break them off. They are disposed to adapt themselves to the inclinations of every one, so as to win the affections of all. They follow after vanity, prattling and gossip. In a word they live gaily, and abhor all penance, austerity and rigour, like death itself. The Director will find these persons suited for higher culture; he must not, however, show himself severe to them, but affable. He must not be stiff, gloomy or hard, but affectionate; otherwise he will soon drive them away by severity of manner. For the same reason, let him show the path to Heaven to be smooth and easy, full of peace, of calm and tranquillity. He will thus be able to lure them on. Let him induce them gradually to diminish their friendships, their conversations, their affections, their vanity, and strive to form in them more solid and more serious habits. Let him put them, little by little, on the way of penance (of which they are in great need) by getting them to fast sometimes, and to use some instrument of bodily mortification.

45. The bilious have a temperament of fire, and are ardent in their aspirations. They easily undertake great things, and carry them out with impetuosity. They wish, like fire, to be above all, and consequently their predominant passion is ambition and arrogance. They praise themselves, make much of their own affairs, and rely on their own strength. They contradict every one in conversation, and do not believe the truth though it be clearly set before them. They censure others in order to bring themselves into repute. They easily find fault, and are intolerant of reproof from others. But at the same time, on meeting with an obstacle, and also when a field for their operations fails them, they become dejected and lose courage, as is the case with flames when not fed with fuel, or when they encounter strong opposition. When persons of this temperament overcome themselves, they acquire solid virtues, and are fitted for doing great things for their neighbour, but, like spirited young horses, they require a strong hand to tame them. The direction of these persons, as regards the interior, should consist in inducing them to meditate, and to have always before their eyes the meekness and humility of Jesus Christ, that, by the help of such an example, they may keep

down the impatience and the impetuosity of their spirit, and may also mortify the great desire which they have to make a display. When they fall into any fault, they must not be vexed with themselves, but must humble themselves profoundly within their hearts. They must not be downcast, they must not lose courage (as often happens to such persons) but, mistrusting their own strength, they must put their confidence in God and have recourse to Him with great fervour. With regard to the exterior, the Director must forbid them to speak about themselves except in cases of real necessity. He must not allow them to dispute with their friends, and he must enjoin upon them merely to propose their opinion and then to hold their peace. He must induce them neither to speak nor act with too great ardour, but calmly and with moderation. He must not allow them all the corporal mortification that they wish to take, since, in this respect, they are apt to fall into excess; and this, in ardent temperaments, fans the fire within them, just as moderation stifles it. Let him check their over-activity, because the bile, when too much stirred up, becomes excited, and the fire within them is increased, in place of being extinguished. Above all, the Confessor must be on his guard against warning and reprehending such persons with too great zeal, because he will thus only add fuel to their flames. Let him act with mildness, with tranquillity, and with gentleness, that they may learn from his example the calm which they themselves ought to preserve in all their actions. In fine, let the Director observe that, although in the body of his penitents one of the above-mentioned qualities—namely, that of earth, water, air, or fire—usually predominates, yet the quality which predominates never goes alone but is always mingled up with some other. Consequently the direction given ought to be adapted to each quality that is present.

46. Third suggestion. In order to manage souls with prudence, wisdom and counsel, it is necessary to remark certain things regarding the exercise of the virtues. First, that some virtues are internal, such as are charity, conformity to the divine will, a humble knowledge of self, patience, mildness, and mortification of the passions. In the exercise of these virtues, we cannot err by

excess, but only by defect, because we cannot love God too much, nor conform ourselves too much to His holy will, nor can we be too humble or too patient; and so of the rest. Other virtues are external, as for instance, fasting, flagellations, wearing haircloth, watching, sleeping on the ground, reading pious books, giving time to vocal prayer. With regard to these virtues we may err by excess or by defect: by the former, when we try to do too much; by the latter, when we do too little. In the second place, we must remark that perfection, whether in its essence or in its proximate dispositions, consists in the internal virtues, and external virtues are means for the acquirement of interior virtues. Whence it follows, that these external virtues ought to be made use of in such measure and proportion that they may assist in the acquirement of the interior virtues, and, when these are found an impediment to them, they ought to be omitted, because they are no longer a means to perfection, but an obstacle to its attainment. Fasts, watchings, and disciplines ought to be employed in order that, by weakening the body, they may impart vigour to the soul for the exercise of its interior acts. If, however, they are carried so far as to oppress the spirit, so that it can only act languidly and with difficulty, they ought to be suspended as being injurious. Thus, if voluntary fasting impedes the practice of any interior virtue—for instance charity—it ought to be abandoned, because, in this case, it is no longer a means, but an obstacle, to the acquirement of true virtue. And in accordance with this doctrine, Cassian tells us,* that the monks of Egypt were accustomed, when other monks from a distance visited them, to break their ordinary fasts, postponing this work of supererogation in favour of an act of charity, which belongs to the substance of Christian perfection. He also adduces the example of two ancient monks of high repute, one of whom prepared the table six times in one day for the strangers who came unexpectedly to see him, himself taking each time a little, in order to encourage them to eat: the other never took any food at all, except it was in the company of some pilgrim monk. Theodoret†

* Instit. Mor., lib. v., cap. 23, ij. 25.
† Hist. Eccl., cap. 3.

relates on this subject an incident in the life of the monk Marcian. Born of royal blood, although he was accustomed to prolong his fasts till the fourth day, and then to eat but one pound of bread, nevertheless, when visited by the monk Avitus, Marcian at once prepared food, making ready himself to join in the meal; and when the other protested that nothing would induce him to break his fast till evening, Marcian replied, "I, for my part, have no difficulty in preferring charity to fasting."

47. In like manner, we ought not to persevere in labour, reading, silence or solitude, when our mind stands in need of relief and, weighed down by these burdens, is not able to carry on its interior exercises; because, in such cases, the exterior virtues impede greater good, and stand in the way of true perfection. The story is well know which Cassian relates of St. John the Evangelist. While the Saint was recreating himself by playing with a partridge, a man came to visit him who was dressed as a hunter, with his bow in his hand and arrows at his side. Seeing the Saint thus amusing himself in so trifling a manner, the hunter was so astonished that he even went so far as to reprove him: "Are you then that John, whose wide-spread reputation has drawn even myself to come to you in order to make your acquaintance? Why, then, if you are the holy man the world represents you to be, why are you trifling away your time in such foolish amusements?"* St. John answered, "What is that which you hold in your hand?" He replied, "It is a bow for shooting my arrows." "But why," said the Saint, "do you not always keep it bent, instead of thus leaving it slack?" "Because," replied the hunter, "if it were always on the stretch it would either break, or lose that spring which gives it power in driving the arrow." "If so," replied the Saint, "you must not be scandalised, young man, at this little relaxation which I am taking; because, in the same way, if the spiritual person does not relax his rigour a little from time to time, the soul, being fatigued and weighed down, is

* Tu ne es, inquit, ille Joannes, cujus fama insignis ac celeberrima, me quoque summo desiderio tuæ agnitionis illexit? Cur ego oblectamentis tam vilibus occuparis? Coll. xxiv., cap. 21.

unfitted for the practice of virtue when necessity requires it."* The prudence, then, and the discretion of the Director must consist in so tempering the exercise of the external and internal virtues which are always advantageous to the soul, that the former may be a help to the latter, and not a hindrance to their growth.

ARTICLE II.

Of the Second Cardinal Virtue—Justice.

CHAPTER I.

THE ESSENCE AND EXCELLENCE OF THE VIRTUE OF JUSTICE.

48. THE meaning expressed by the word Justice is not always one and the same. Sometimes by Justice we mean all the moral virtues. Hence we are accustomed, as St. Chrysostom observes, to call that man just who is adorned with all virtues.† It was in this sense that our Divine Redeemer said, "Blessed are they who nourish in their hearts an ardent and eager thirst after justice;"‡ that is, as St. Gregory of Nyssa explains it, who hunger and thirst after every virtue. In this sense, too, Christ said on another occasion, "Unless you have greater justice," that is, greater virtue, "than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter

* Nec nostri, inquit beatus Joannes, animi te offendat, O juvenis, tam parva hæc, brevisque laxatio, quæ nisi remissione quâdam rigorem intensionis suæ interdum relevet, ac relaxet; irremisso rigore lentescens, virtuti spiritus, cum necessitas poscet, obsecundare non poterit.

† Justus omnem virtutem complectitur: hoc enim nomen consuevimus dicere de his, qui omnimodam virtutem exercent. Hom. 23.

‡ Omnis virtus hic nomine justitiæ significatur. Orat. iv., De Beatit.

into the Kingdom of Heaven; you shall never set foot on that blessed soil."*

49. We are not, however, speaking here of justice taken in this wide and general sense, but in a limited sense, as being the virtue which ranks second in the company of the Cardinal Virtues. It is thus defined by Ulpian:—"Justice is a stable and constant will to give to each one what by his right belongs to him."† In order, as the Angelic Doctor says, to frame these words into the terms of a perfect definition, we must substitute the act of the will which alone is expressed by them—for the habit of giving to every one what by his right belongs to him.‡ Hence it follows, that justice has always for its object some one distinct from the person who practises it, because it is a virtue which seeks equality of things according to the right of each one; nor can any one maintain equality with himself, but it is necessary that he should maintain it with some other person distinct from himself, as the holy Doctor again observes.§

50. Justice is of two kinds: one is called Commutative Justice, and the other Distributive. The first is the justice which wills that equality of thing to thing should exist among persons with due proportion; and this ought to be practised in contracts, in buying, in selling, in letting and hiring, in restitutions, in loans, and in other things of the like nature. The second is the justice which distributes rewards or punishments according to the merit or guilt of each one. In so far as it gives awards proportioned to merit, such as honours, positions, offices of trust, and donations, it is called Remunerative Justice. In so far as it assigns due punishment to the guilty—for instance, imprisonment,

* Nisi abundaverit justitia vestra plusquam scribarum, et pharisæorum, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum. Matth. v. 20.

† Constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum unicuique tribuens. L. Justitia, § De Just. et Jure.

‡ Si quis vellet eam in debitam formam definitionis reducere, posset sic dicere: quod justitia est habitus secundum quem aliquis constanti et perpetuâ voluntate jus suum unicuique tribuit. 2, 2, q. 58, art. 1.

§ Dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, cum nomen justitiæ, æqualitatem importet, ex suâ ratione justitia habet quod sit ad alterum: nihil enim est sibi æquale, sed alteri. Ibid., art. 1.

exile, the galleys, or death—it receives the name of Vindictive Justice.

51. To what an extent this virtue enlightens the soul which possesses it, may be drawn from the fact, that Aristotle compares it to the morning and the evening star,* because it sheds splendour on our souls equal to that which this bright planet gives in the firmament; the star being named, according as it appears in the morning or in the evening, Lucifer or Hesperus. St. Augustine shows, and explains admirably, the great lustre which this virtue bestows. Imagine an old and infirm man, his limbs weak and withered, but who is adorned with all justice, in every sense of the word,—I mean to say, one who loves right conduct and does not covet the goods of others; who, while helping his neighbours in their necessities, gives liberally from his own property; who, moreover, gives to God what is just, being ready to sacrifice even his own decrepit limbs for the holy faith. It is certain that all would highly esteem an old man of this character, and would feel a great love for him. But yet, says the Saint, what is it which appears in our eyes worthy of affection in this aged person, who is pale and wrinkled, whose voice falters, who is bent double, and is weak and trembling in every limb? It is the virtue of justice; this virtue of itself renders him worthy of love. Finally, the Saint concludes, "There is a certain lustre and a certain beauty in justice, which is not visible to the eyes of the body, but is seen by the eyes of the mind; and being seen by the eyes of the soul, moves us to love this virtue, and to love it with great intensity.†

52. According to the same Aristotle, justice acquires this special lustre from the fact that it is a virtue which is concerned with the utility of others. Among the virtues there are some

* Ut neque hesperus, neque lucifer sit æque admirabilis. Ethic., cap. 5.

† Si nulla est pulchritudo justitiæ, unde amatur justus senex Quid affert in corpore, quod oculos delectet? . . . Tamen si justus est, si alienum non concupiscit, si de suo quod habet erogat indigentibus, si bene monet, et recte sapit, si integre credit, si paratus est pro fide veritatis etiam ipsa confracta membra impendere (multi enim martyres etiam senes), unde illum amamus, quid in eo bonum videmus oculis carneis? Nihil: quædam ergo est pulchritudo justitiæ, quam videmus oculis cordis, et amamus, et exardescimus. In Psal. xxxiv.

through which we do good to ourselves alone, and there are others by the help of which we procure the advantage of our neighbours. Now, the virtues of this second class, Aristotle says—and St. Thomas confirms his opinion—are of greater value, and should be preferred, as being more excellent on account of their beneficence.* And, accordingly, among us who are blessed with the Christian faith, and can judge of the virtues by a clearer light, charity is held in greater esteem than the other virtues; because the latter regard only the perfection of him who practises them, while the former is wholly directed to the good of others. The Philosopher then proceeds to apply this general teaching to justice, saying, that this is a sovereignly perfect virtue; because from its looking always to others in the exercise of its acts, it is highly beneficial and contains within itself, at least by a certain connection, all the other virtues. He then quotes a maxim of Bias, who used to say, that magistracies, offices, and dignities, are tests of the virtuous man; since in these positions he can practise not only those virtues which are advantageous to himself, but also virtue which is directed to others, and is beneficial to them. And this is justice.†

53. To the authority of Aristotle I join the holy authority of St. Ambrose, who in very clear and striking terms confirms the teaching we have just quoted. "Great," says the Saint, "is the lustre and splendour of justice." And he gives the reason adduced by us: "Because it is a virtue which does not exist for itself, but for the advantage of others, and which helps us much to live together in society." It is set on high, so as to be able by means of its righteous judgments to subject and keep all things in due order,

* Necesse est maximas virtutes esse eas, quæ sunt aliis honestissimæ: siquidem est virtus potentia benefactiva. 2, 2, quæst. 58, art. 32. Arist. Rhet., lib. v., cap. 9.

† Proverbio dicere consuevimus, justitia in se virtutes continet omnes; atque perfecta maxime virtus est, quia perfectæ virtutis est usus, idque est ex eo, quia non ad se solum, sed etiam ad alium is, qui ipsam habet, uti virtute potest. Complures enim in propriis quidem uti virtute possunt, sed in iis, quæ sunt ad alium, nequeunt, et propterea Biantis sententia illa bene se habere videtur, Magistratus virum ostendet, ad alium enim est. Arist., lib. v., Moral., cap. 1.

to give aid to the oppressed, to afford succour by money and kindly offices, to expose itself to the dangers that threaten others, and to ensure the peace and safety of all. The Saint concludes by saying, that no one would fail to aspire to the perfection of justice, if avarice with its sordid calculations did not stand in the way, and clog the practice of so sublime a virtue.* The reader may hence see that justice being of such peerless excellence, St. Augustine might well affirm that it is a great virtue and deserving the highest praise.†

54. The Emperor Alexander Severus was fully aware of the value of this virtue; for, as we may learn from Lampridius, he was so exact an observer of its dictates, that he never issued any decree or pronounced any judgment before it had been carefully examined by twenty of the most able and learned jurists, each of whom had to give him his opinion in writing. If it ever happened that any judge, out of love of money, had pronounced an unrighteous award, he delayed not to put out the man's eyes with his own hands. For, on beholding the balance of justice broken by avarice he was excited to such indignation that, rushing on the culprit like a raging lion, he tore the eyes out of his head. And Nicephorus relates of the Emperor Trajan, that he was so enamoured of justice that, on one occasion, drawing his sword in presence of all the people, he handed it to the Prefect of Rome, saying, "If I deal not justly in the government of the Empire, slay me with this sword; but if I proceed with due justice and uprightness, use is for my defence."‡

55. But far more to be admired is what Valerius Maximus relates of Zeleucus. This prince had enacted by an inviolable statute that whoever was guilty of adultery should lose his eyes. His favourite son being convicted of this crime, at once, without

* Magnus justitiæ splendor, quæ aliis potius nata, quam sibi, communitatem, et societatem nostram adjuvat, excelsitatem tenet, ut suo judicio omnia subjecta habeat, opem aliis ferat, pecuniam conferat, officia non abnuat, pericula susci piat aliena. Quis non cuperet hanc virtutis arcem tenere, nisi prima avaritia infirmaret, atque inflecteret tantæ virtutis vigorem? De Offic., lib. i., cap. 28.

† Justitia virtus est animi magna, præcipueque laudabilis. In Psal. xviij.

‡ Cape ferrum hoc, et si quidem recte imperium gessero, pro me, sin aliter contra me hoc utere. Lib. iij., Histor. Eccles.

being stayed by claims of kindred, or giving ear to the pleadings of his affection, he condemned him to the terrible penalty which was established for all. The whole people, out of love for the son, and the esteem they bore the father, craved pardon for him. But Zeleucus, giving heed rather to the claims of justice than to the voice of the populace, remained inexorable. Overcome, at length, by the lamentations and entreaties of his subjects, he bethought himself of a way of satisfying the claims of the law without condemning his son to total blindness. He ordered, then, that his son should be deprived of one eye, and himself also of one eye—showing, in his own person, by this tempering of justice (as the same historian observes), a tender parent and upright lawgiver.*

CHAPTER II.

THE NECESSITY THERE IS OF POSSESSING THE VIRTUE OF JUSTICE.

56. WHOEVER cares not for the peace and tranquillity of his soul is no friend to his own happiness. Of what avail are all the riches of Crœsus, all the gold of Peru, all the pearls of the Red Sea, to a heart devoid of peace? Of what use to such an one are the delights of pleasure-grounds, hunting, tournaments, jousts, dignity, station, kingdoms, and even empires themselves? Of none whatever; for all these outward advantages, without peace, fail to satisfy our hearts, and to keep them at rest and in contentment. Hence St Augustine might well say, that so precious a good is peace, that, even humanly speaking, there is nothing more agreeable, or desirable, or precious to be found, because in reality all our happiness here below consists in peace.†

* Ita debitum supplicii modum legi reddidit, æquitatis admirabili temperamento se inter patrem misericordem, et justum legislatorem partitus. Lib. v., cap. 5, De Justitiâ.

† Tantum est pacis bonum, ut etiam in rebus terrenis, atque mortalibus nihil soleat gratius audiri, nihil desiderabilius concupisci, nihil postremo possit melius inveniri. De Civit. Dei, lib. xix., cap. 11.

57. Now, justice is the companion and inseparable partner of this peace which is so precious; for take away justice, and peace soon vanishes, and with it all our temporal happiness. The reason hereof is, that all our troubles and disquiet arise from the infringement of some right connected with our property, our honour, or our personal safety; which amounts to saying that they are caused by some violation of justice. If you want to be convinced of the truth of this, go out into the city where you reside, and set yourself to listen attentively to the complaints wherein your neighbours give vent to the sorrows of their hearts; you will hear one lamenting that, by an undue stretch of power, he has been deprived of his house; another, that he has been secretly robbed of his money or goods; this one complains because, by an unjust lawsuit, he has been ousted from his farm; the other, because men do not keep to their bargains, fail to pay their debts, or hinder their fellows by fraud from their lawful gains. You may see hereby that all these persons have lost their peace of mind, because the laws of justice have not been duly observed. Go on listening to the complaints of these sorrow-stricken people; you will find one who, lashed to fury, is planning vengeance against some slanderer who has blemished his fair fame, or that of his daughter, of his wife, or of his family. You will find those who burn with hate against some enemy who has treated them with insult and outrage. As you will observe, all these have been robbed of their peace of mind through an infringement of rights, grounded on justice, to freedom from injury to their property, their honour, or their persons. And should you continue to meet with any deprived of peace and harassed by disquiet, you will surely discover that their affliction owes its origin to some one violation of justice; for, of a truth, peace and justice are two inseparable companions, who can never be parted; one introduces the other into our hearts, nor can one be outraged without the other being immediately troubled.

58. Listen to St. Augustine's apt comment on these words of the Psalmist, *Do justice and you shall enjoy peace*, and both of them, as the Royal Prophet says, will come and embrace and kiss each other within your heart. But if you cleave not to one, you

cannot possess the other. For these two, peace and justice, love each other dearly, and are so closely linked together, that whoever does justice shall, in finding justice, find peace. But peradventure you would wish to enjoy peace and not do justice. There is no man on earth but who desires peace; the evil, however, is, that all will not practise justice. Ask any one you may chance to meet, 'Do you wish for peace?' and the whole of mankind will, as with one voice, reply, 'Yes, we wish for it, we desire it, we want to have it, and we love it.' You must then love justice, for peace and justice are two inseparable companions: unless you love the friend of peace, peace will not love you, nor come to visit your inmost heart."* Words which set forth in a lively manner the close alliance existing between peace and justice, the cause whereof is given by Isaias, when he says, *The work of justice shall be peace*,† which is as much as to say, that peace is a fruit that springs from justice: in other words, peace is an offshoot of this tree, a balm which drops from this plant, a stream which wells up from this source. Should the stream dry up, the plant and tree of justice wither, peace must vanish at once.

59. I remember having read‡ that once, when a parish Priest of exemplary conversation was celebrating the holy Sacrifice, one of his parishioners, his equal in merit, though not in rank, beheld in the Sacred Host the ravishing and wondrous semblance of the infant Jesus, and observed, that when the Pax was being passed round, the Divine Babe, clasping the good Priest's neck in His little arms, gave him the kiss of peace. Some time after, it happened that this curate, being annoyed at a certain beast which came at night-time into his garden and damaged his plants, attacked it

* Fac, ait, justitiam, et habebis pacem, ut osculentur se justitia et pax. Si autem non amaveris justitiam, pacem non habebis. Amant enim se duo ista, justitia et pax, et osculantur se; ut qui fecerit justitiam, inveniat pacem osculantem justitiam. Duæ amicæ sunt: tu forte unam vis, et alteram non facis. Nemo enim est, qui non vult pacem; sed non omnes volunt operari justitiam. Interroga omnes homines: Vultis pacem? uno ore tibi respondet omne genus hominum: Opto, cupio, volo, amo. Ama et justitiam, quia duæ amicæ sunt justitia, et pax. Si amicam pacis non amaveris, nec amabit te ipsa pax, nec veniet ad te. In Psal. lxxxiv.

† Et erit opus justitiæ pax. Isa. xxxij. 17.

‡ Spec. Exemp.-Dist. v., Exemp. 55.

with a stick, and beat it so that it died, causing, by so doing, a grievous and unjust loss to a poor neighbour, whose sustenance, for the most part, depended on this animal. The Priest went as usual to say Mass, and his parishioner to hear it; but when he gave to others the kiss of peace, Jesus Christ was no more seen to give it to his minister. At so unlooked-for an occurrence the good layman was much troubled, not knowing what the cause could be; but I myself feel no surprise, for I can very well guess what was the occasion. This Priest had driven justice out of his heart by an act at once injurious and unjust, which had done so much damage to his humble neighbour,—nor was he deserving of peace. And as, according to the Psalmist, *Peace and justice kiss each other*,* he was unworthy of the kiss of peace for having become an enemy to justice. If, then, justice and peace be so closely knitted to each other, it is obvious that every one stands in need of the virtue of justice, without which we cannot attain happiness, I do not say hereafter, but not even here below, as it wholly consists in the inner calm of the heart.

60. But I will go further, and say, that without justice not only is peace impossible, but society itself cannot exist; for, as St. Augustine says, Apart from justice, there can be no state, dominion, city or people, to coalesce into a community; since, by a people living a civilised life, we mean a union of men bound together by laws in view of the public good; and it is unquestionable that where justice is absent there is no observance of law.† Hence, the holy Doctor infers, that where true justice does not exist, there can be no form of civil society.‡ Banish from the world the virtue of justice, and nothing remains but brute force—violence will everywhere prevail. No one will be master of what belongs to him; everything will be open to theft and robbery. No one will be sure of his own life, or safe as to his honour; every

* Justitia, et pax osculatæ sunt. Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

† Ubi ergo justitia vera non est, nec jus potest esse, quod enim jure fit, profecto juste fit; quod autem injuste fit, jure fieri non potest.

‡ Quocirca ubi non est vera justitia, juris consensu sociatus cœtus hominum non potest esse, et ideo nec populus; juxta illam Scipionis, et Ciceronis definitionem. . . . Procul dubio colligitur, ubi justitia non est, non esse rempublicam. De Civit. Dei, lib. xix, cap. 21.

man will be exposed to cruelty, barbarity, and outrage. In such a state of things we should come to resemble those savages who shelter themselves in caves and holes in the rocks, and hunt each other like wild beasts, deeming that one of their number the most to be envied who is the most robust, most cruel, and most blood-thirsty among them all. In a word, as the Saint above quoted aptly puts it: "Take away justice, and kingdoms would soon become hordes of brigands, for what is a band of robbers but a kingdom in miniature?"* So that we all should set as much store by justice as we do on our living as men, and not as brutes or beasts of prey.

61. But though all should cherish justice as a virtue most essential to the harmony and social condition of human life, none should be more zealous for it than the depositaries of sovereign authority, to whom justice has intrusted her balance, that in all things they may proceed with due equity; and as they are bound to enforce the observance of its laws on those subject to their rule, and to punish transgressors, so they, much more than others, ought to show themselves to be its most attached followers. St. Gregory the Great might then well say, that the highest virtue of a ruler is to do justice, to maintain every one in his rights, to suffer neither oppression nor abuse of power among his subjects.† St. Augustine relates, that a pirate being brought before Alexander the Great, was reproved by him with the following sharp words: "How now, ruffian! dost thou dare to infest these seas with thy piracies?" The robber boldly replied, "Wherefore dost thou do the like by land? Because I plunder by sea in a small bark, I am called a robber; while thou, because thou dost the same on land, at the head of a large army, art called by the glorious name of General and Emperor;"‡ showing hereby that sovereigns, when they violate justice, are equally guilty with their subjects.

* Remotâ justitiâ, quid sunt regna, nisi magna latrocinia? quia et ipsa latrocinia quid sunt, nisi parva regna? De Civ. Dei., lib. iv., cap. 4.

† Summum in regibus bonum est justitiam colere, et sua cuique jura servare et subjectis non sinere quod potestatis est fieri, sed quod æquum est custodire. Lib. vij., Epist. 121.

‡ Nam cum idem rex hominem interrogasset, quid ei videretur ut mare haberet infestum? ille liberâ contumaciâ, Quid tibi, inquit, ut orbem terra-

62. I do not tarry here to speak of the particular acts of justice to be observed in contracts, sales, purchases, restitution ; and much less in the award of recompenses and punishments, because this is a very vast subject, and is the province of jurists and casuists. As a simple writer on asceticism, it suffices for me to have set forth the essence, the charms, and the necessity of this virtue, in order to enamour the reader of it ; and I now proceed to suggest some few of the means best suited to its attainment.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEANS TO ACQUIRE THE VIRTUE OF JUSTICE.

63. THE first means is to keep our heart detached from wealth and money ; because, from this sordid attachment it is that all the wrongs done to our neighbour take their rise, as well as all the faults committed against the virtue of justice. St. Basil says that we have justice and a sense of fair dealing instilled into our heart by nature herself ;* but our inordinate attachment to wealth and love of riches, overcloud this shining light, distort the good inclination we have of acting according to what is right, and lead us to infringe the prescriptions of justice, and so to become the unrighteous possessors of what belongs to another. Hence the Son of Sirach might well say, *Nothing is more wicked than to love money.*† He then that would follow after justice must needs keep his heart free from such attachment, and be averse to all massing up of riches.

64. St. Augustine relates, in two different places of his Homilies, so rare an example of disinterestedness, that he wearies not of

rum? Sed quia ego id exiguo navigio facio, latro vocor ; quia tu magnâ classe, imperator. De Civ. Dei, lib. iv., cap. 4.

* Est justitia quædam insita, inditaque æqui distributio. Hom. 12, In Princ. Prov.

† Nihil est iniquius, quam pecuniam. Ecclus. x. 10.

admiring and extolling it to the skies.* While the Saint was living at Milan, a student of grammar, poor in the goods of fortune, but enriched with Christian virtues, found a purse containing two hundred pieces of silver. As he was a lover of justice, and detached from all affection for money, he at once published advertisements, giving notice of the sum which he had found, and of the name and address of the finder. The owner, who grieved over his loss, and was seeking everywhere for his money, having chanced to read the bills, hastened forthwith to the student's lodging to claim his lost treasure. The latter questioned him as to the kind of purse and the amount of the money, and finding that his answers tallied, restored it to him in full. The owner, on receiving the purse, took out twenty pieces, which he offered in acknowledgment of his obligation, but the other refused them. He next made an offer of ten, then of five, but with the same result. Finally, he threw down the purse at the student's feet, saying, in a determined tone, "I have lost nothing. If you refuse to take anything, I mean to have lost nothing." The holy Doctor, lost in admiration, here exclaims, "What a contest, brethren! what an admirable conflict was this! worthy to have the whole world for its theatre and God Himself for its spectator."† At length, after a long parley, the student yielded, and accepting the present offered him, went forthwith to distribute it to the poor, without keeping a single coin for his own use. "Consider well," concludes the Saint, "this illustrious example, this noble instance of disinterestedness, that you may be moved to imitate it."‡

65. I will add to this another instance of detachment, related by St. Gregory in his Dialogues. Libertinus, Abbot of the Monastery of Fondi, travelling on the business of his Community, fell in with the soldiers of Totila, king of the Goths, by whom he was forced to dismount and violently deprived of his horse. At this loss, the servant of God not only was not moved or disturbed,

* Hom. 9, ex Quinquag. et Serm. 21, De Verb. Apost.

† Quale certamen, fratres mei, quale certamen! qualis pugna, qualis conflictus! theatrum mundus, spectator Deus!

‡ Considerate, fratres, tam gloriosum exemplum, et tam admirabile factum.

but turning to the rapacious soldiers, said to them with a cheerful countenance, "Take this whip, too; you will find it useful in guiding him and making him go faster."* And although the soldiers, being brought to a better feeling by so unusual an occurrence, gave him back the animal of which they had so unjustly robbed him, he, with admirable loftiness of mind, refused to receive it again, saying to them that he could do without it.† The reader should emulate this detachment from wealth and gain. And I give him my word that he will never offend against justice—that neither a farthing, nor a single atom of what belongs to another, will ever stick to his fingers.

66. But to attain so profitable a detachment, we must frequently ponder, and continually bear in mind, the important maxim that all we now have must shortly be abandoned. We are under the necessity of actually parting from all the goods of fortune. This thought should help us to withdraw our affections from them. As holy Job says, *The rich man when he lies down shall take nothing along with him.*"‡ No, not one farthing out of his purse, nor a blade of grass from his fields, nor a stone from his houses. The Apostle says, *We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it.*§ If a guest, bidden to a sumptuous banquet, were to want to take away the gold and silver plate, after having filled himself with costly delicacies, what would his host say? Surely he would exclaim, "Hold! these things were allowed you for your use during the brief time of the repast, but not that you should take them into enduring and perpetual possessions." So too, gold and silver, money, possessions, gaudy clothes, lands, gardens, villas, houses, mansions, are not granted to us for ever, but only during the brief span of the banquet of this life, at the close whereof we must needs leave them all behind. And then, *whose shall those things be which thou*

* Qui jumenti perditi damnum libentur ferens, etiam flagellum, quod tenebat, diripientibus obtulit, dicens: Tollite, ut habeatis qualiter hoc jumentum minare possitis.

† Ite cum bono, ego opus caballo non habeo. Lib. i., cap. 2.

‡ Dives cum dormierit, nihil secum auferet. Job xxvij. 19.

§ Nihil enim intulimus in hunc mundum, haud dubium, quod nec auferre quid possumus. I. ad Tim. vj. 7.

*hast provided?** Now, as a guest would be foolish to become attached to the precious vessels which are allowed for his use during a costly banquet, since he must be well aware that in a few hours he must part from them, so, too, a man would be foolish who conceives a fondness for those worldly goods which he must abandon in a few years or months, and that pass like a vapour. Such thoughts as these will extinguish in the human breast that desire of wealth which tempts so many to tamper with the scales of justice by sordid gains and manifest injustice.

67. The second means of acquiring this virtue of justice is to beware of small acts of injustice; for he who despises slight faults will fall into great ones, whereby he will become the enemy of this beautiful virtue.† And, moreover, so dangerous an attachment to money and property, of which I have so far been speaking, grows insensibly by these unjust gains, slight as they may be, and by increasing beyond a certain point, induces even persons of good sense to trample underfoot the sacred dictates of justice. What was it made the traitor Apostle Judas fall into the most enormous injustice that could ever be committed? What was it that brought him to sell the life of that most innocent victim, the Son of God, for a trifling sum of money? Nothing but a few slight thefts to which the wretched man had accustomed himself. Hence, St. Augustine, speaking of the handling of money, whether in spending or receiving, says, that while so engaged we must beware of eternal damnation, as no fault in this matter should be esteemed trifling; which means that the injustice will either be grievous of itself, or if not, on account of the smallness of the quantity, it will pave the way to greater dishonesty and so to ruin.‡ And the holy Doctor is right in speaking thus, since our Saviour teaches us that he who is faithful in small things will be faithful in what is great, and that he who is not faithful in small

* Quæ parasti cujus erunt? Luc. xij. 20.

† Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet. Ecclus. xix. 1.

‡ Ubi etiam cavendus est æternus interitus, omnia magna sunt, quæ dicimus, usque adeo, ut nec de ipsis pecuniariis rebus vel acquirendis, vel amittendis parva videri debeant, quæ doctor ecclesiasticus dicit, sive sit illa magna, sive parva pecunia. Lib. iv., De Doct. Christ., cap. 18.

things will not be faithful in those of greater importance.* Hence we should not make light account of any injustice, as all such is either grievous of itself, or, at least, disposes us to what is grievous.

68. A fact related by Cesarius will serve as an illustration of this point.† He relates it as he himself had heard it, not once only, but frequently, from the lips of the person to whom it happened. A Priest of the name of Dainulph, a Pilgrim of the Order of Knights Templars, was seized during his boyhood with a dangerous illness, of which he died in the flower of his age. His soul, on departing from the body, was presented before the judgment-seat of Christ, where he beheld the face of the Lord, but covered with a veil and, as far as the thickness of the veil would allow him to discover, the countenance seemed to him severe. Then the devil came forward as accuser, and having nothing else to lay to his charge, said, "This boy has stolen a farthing from his brother, and as he has not repented of it, he deserves punishment." The youth was forthwith cast into a pit of fire, where his tortures were so atrocious, that after his restoration to life, he had no words wherewith to express their severity. In an hour's time, he was taken out by the Angel and brought anew before the judgment-seat of God, where, being purified from that sin, he beheld the face of Jesus no longer stern, but serene; not covered with a veil, but refulgent with light. On the right hand of our Lord, he saw, on a splendid throne, the Virgin-Mother, and all around a multitude of Angels and Saints, who formed for them a magnificent court. After this glorious vision, he was, by the decree of the Divine Judge, sent back to life, to the astonishment of those who were already mourning him as dead. That this was not a mere dream, but a true vision, was shown by the effects which it immediately produced; for the youth, terrified by the punishment that he had undergone, and attracted by the foretaste of heavenly glory which had been allowed him for a brief interval, forsook home, relatives, country,

* Qui fidelis est in minimo, et in majori fidelis est, et qui in modico iniquus est, in majori iniquus est. Luc. xvj. 10.

† Lib. xij., cap. 57.

and every worldly vanity, and withdrew to the cloister to lead a religious life. Now, from this fact I would draw the following inferences. If for a trifling injustice, the petty theft of a small coin, from one, too, so near of kin, this boy was debarred from beholding the face of his judge, save in so far as to be aware of a stern and rigorous expression upon it; if he had, moreover, to expiate his fault in so cruel a fire, we must perforce allow that St. Augustine was right in asserting that no fault against justice can be deemed trivial. Because, if the slighest injustice, such as is committed by the theft even of a penny, is most disgraceful in the eyes of men, how much more abominable will it be in the most pure sight of God? We must, then, be on our guard against doing our neighbour any wrong or damage, though never so trifling, whether in buying, selling, paying wages, or in any other contract. We must follow after justice, and long to possess so excellent a virtue.

69. The third means to be taken is, that each one should examine himself exactly and minutely as to the obligations imposed by justice, for the purpose of discovering his every shortcoming, and earnestly striving after its amendment. This, it is true, is a universal means for the attainment of every virtue, but it has a most special efficacy to help us to acquire an incorruptible justice; for, as St. Basil says, it is no easy matter to discern the claims of justice, and consequently the wrongs we may be guilty of in their despite. It is difficult, in the conduct of our business, to find out what are the demands of justice, partly on account of the failing of a certain enlightened prudence whereby we have the power of perceiving what is right; partly, too, on account of the passions that bear sway within our souls, darkening the understanding so as to render us incapable of such discernment.* And he is right: because the hankering after possessions and their increase, the anxiety of maintaining ourselves and our household, raise such mists in certain minds, that they can no longer dis-

* Quoniam justitiæ habitus est, qui pro dignitate cuique suum tribuit; difficilis hæc est inventu, atque cognitu, partim quod deficiente prudentiâ, non cuique pateat quid æquum sit, partim quod animo affectibus humanis occupato, rectum obscuretur. Homil. 12, In Princ. Proverb.

tinguish between what is just and what is unjust, or perceive the wrongs which they are doing their neighbour, nor the offences committed by them against justice. There is scarce a man in the world but has to complain of being in some manner wronged in his property; yet is it a hard matter to meet with a single person who will candidly own to guilt on this point. How does this come to be the case, since between being wrong and doing wrong, between suffering and inflicting injury, there is so close a connection that one term cannot possibly exist without the other? This is the reason why there are but too many covetous and dishonest people; though blinded as they are by love of money, they are almost unconscious of the wrongs they do their neighbour.

70. What remedy, then, is there to preserve us from a blindness so fatal to justice and to our own conscience? St. Basil points it out. It is daily to establish a judgment-seat in our heart, and to pass a righteous sentence on each of our deeds, especially on such as concern our neighbour's interests, weighing each one of them, and balancing it in the scales of uprightness and justice. The light of God's grace will scatter the mists which covetousness causes to rise within our minds, and will enable us to discover the slightest speck of injustice.*

71. If, after such scrutiny, we find ourselves guilty of some failing, we should repent of our fault, promise amendment, determine to make good every injury; and, above all, conceive a deep feeling of confusion at a transgression so opposed to the laws of justice, reason, and the whole decalogue. Nor is it difficult to attain to such a sense of shame, since I find that the very brutes have at times been ashamed of the wrongs they have done against justice. A remarkable story is told, in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,† concerning a she-wolf, and it is related also by Sulpicius Severus in his Dialogues.‡ The animal was in the

* Quoniam ex ipsius Salomonis sententiâ, cogitationes justorum judicia sunt; viro sapienti omnino satagendum erit, intra cordis arcana tribunal constituere, rectaque facere judicia, mentem quoque in trutinâ suspendere ad ea quæ recta sunt . . . In Eâdem Homil. Proverb., cap. 12, 5.

† Part 3, cap. 7. ‡ Dial. 1, cap. 8.

habit of attending at the evening-meal of the monk Postumianus without ever missing the hour, and after having received from him a piece of bread, she licked his right hand, as if in token of thanks, and returned to her concealment in the woods. One night the wolf, having come at the accustomed hour, did not find her benefactor, who had gone to accompany a strange monk that had called upon him. She went into the cell, and, prowling about, found a basket with five loaves in it. This she opened with her paws, and having taken one in her mouth, she ate it and went her way. Postumianus returned and discovered the theft, and by the fragments scattered about the threshold of his cell guessed who was the thief. Who would have thought it? The wolf remained for a whole week, contrary to her usual habit, without daring to show herself, as if for shame of the unjust damage which she had inflicted upon her benefactor. At length she returned, but with such a mien, and with such gestures, that one would have said she blushed at her theft and craved pardon for it, as she durst not approach the threshold but kept far off, with her head and eyes down. Moved with compassion at this sight, the holy recluse called her to him, began to stroke and fondle her, and gave her a double portion; and the beast, as if she understood that she was pardoned, resumed her habit of presenting herself at the time of the hermit's supper. The Holy Ghost sends us to irrational creatures to learn a lesson of virtue: *Go to the ant, thou sluggard.** So, too, may he who in his examination of conscience discovers that he has in anywise wronged his neighbour in his goods, learn from this brute how to blush at so shameful a deed, and what sorrow he should feel for the fault in his heart, and the amendment at which he should aim. By frequent self-questioning on this head, he will come to find out, and to repair, whatever violation of justice he may have been guilty of, and he will then attain to the perfection of this virtue.

* Vade ad formicam piger. Prov. vj. 6.

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE ORDINARY VIOLATIONS OF JUSTICE AND THE WAY WHEREIN THEY ARE TO BE COMPENSATED.

72. FIRST suggestion. The conscience of your penitent will be either relaxed or delicate. In the case of persons of too free a conscience, who readily allow themselves to be defiled with mortal sin, it will not unfrequently happen that you will meet with breaches of justice. It is the duty of a good Director to give such as these to understand the grievousness of their sins; and for that purpose, he will set before them the advantages and prerogatives, as explained above, of that justice which they so grossly offend by their dishonesty. But especially should he din into their ears the teaching of St. Paul—that the property of others is a snare from which it is most difficult to escape, whereby the devil leads souls into captivity, enslaves them, and drags them down to hell.*

73. But if his penitents happen to have a timorous conscience, the Confessor will often discover in them acts of injustice which are very real, yet not so obvious, being covered and concealed by empty excuses. He will come across devout ladies who will pay the women that work in the house with the vilest things, the very rubbish of their houses; valuing the toils of others not according to the rules of equity but according to the calculations of their own parsimony. He will meet with spiritual men who make no scruple in delaying payment of their debts for a long time; in withholding their wages from some of their workmen; or in not paying all that is due; that is to say, the amount which is a proper compensation for their labour. He will find those who fail to keep with their tenants and labourers the agreements to which they consented, and who increase their burdens, and exact from them additional work to which they are not bound, not giving, meanwhile, fair wages; as if the toil of a poor man had not its

* Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem, et in laqueum diaboli. I. ad Tim. vj. 9.

fair market-price equally with any other commodity. He will find those who, in buying, selling, and other bargains, keep their eyes well open to their own advantage, but have not the like regard to fairness; as if whatever tended to their profit were also just. And for this and the like conduct, they have no qualms of conscience; they soothe themselves with pretences suggested rather by self-interest than by justice. To this class of persons the Director should speak with a holy liberty, and lay bare before them, without any human respect, the injustice of which they are guilty, that they may know and correct it. He must imitate the spirit of St. Francis of Paula, who, in the presence of Louis XI., king of France, took some of the coins which had been produced by the customary imposts, and squeezing them in his wonder-working hands, made red blood to trickle from them. Then turning to the king, "Behold, Sire," he said, "behold the blood of your poor subjects, which you squeeze out of them by such exorbitant taxes." With the same freedom should the Director open the eyes of these purblind Christians and pretended devotees, and show them the wrongs they do their journeymen, workmen, artisans, servants, and others with whom they have business relations. He should often speak to them freely and boldly, as did St. John the Baptist to Herod, saying, *It is not lawful* to do this, for it occasions unjust damage: *it is not lawful* to do that, because it prejudices the rights of others, and disturbs the balance of due equality.

74. Second suggestion. Restitution is not merely an act of justice, which requires that we fully comply with the claim that every man has to recover what belongs to him, but it is so rigorous a duty of justice that no Priest can, of his own authority, dispense us from it. I say this, because Directors will not seldom meet with persons ignorant enough to fancy that restitution is a mere penance, an obligation imposed at pleasure by the Confessor in punishment of any theft committed or wrong done to our neighbour; and when called upon to make restitution, they will reply, "Father, pray do not lay this penance upon me;" or, "Do not place me under this obligation; it is too difficult. Tell me to do anything but that, and I will readily obey."

Such persons must be instructed in the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, which is,* that the Priest holds the place of God, but that he does not hold the place of the person to whom restitution is due from the penitent. So, if the penitent had contracted, by vows to God, the obligation to employ in the divine service some portion of his substance, the Confessor might, if provided with the requisite faculties, act in the name of God, Whose Vicar he is, and either wholly free the man from such an obligation or commute it into something lighter. But if, by some deed of injustice, he has laid himself under the obligation of making restitution, the Confessor, whatever his authority, cannot dispense the penitent; as he in nowise holds a commission from the person's creditor in the sacred tribunal. He to whom restitution is due can alone set his debtor free, and he, as we suppose, is unwilling so to do. Hence the penitent must either perforce comply with the rigorous claims of justice, which impose upon him the duty of making satisfaction to the full, or he will incur everlasting perdition. For, as St. Thomas says, since it is necessary to eternal salvation to fulfil the laws of justice, it follows that it is necessary, if we would be saved, to restore all that we have unjustly taken.†

75. Third suggestion. The Director must not be too ready to give credence to the excuses which many allege, by which to exempt themselves from the obligations that justice imposes, for instance, the impossibility of making restitution; because this impossibility is not suggested by reason but by passion. He should weigh this alleged inability in the balance of the sanctuary; and he will usually find that what is really meant by it, is a certain attachment to riches and money, which makes it difficult to part with these, or else some inconvenience which would have to be put up with, did the penitent restore the sum in question. But this is not sheer inability, nor is it a reasonable motive which may dispense us from fulfilling our duties, else no one would

* 4 dist. 15, quæst. 1, art. 5.

† Cum conservare justitiam sit de necessitate salutis, consequens est, quod restituere id quod injuste ablatum est alicui, sit de necessitate salutis. 2, 2, quæst. 62, art. 2.

ever be bound to make restitution, since it is impossible that this can be made without some trouble and inconvenience. Nor does it always avail to urge the seriousness of the inconvenience; for if what the creditor has to suffer in waiting be serious, it is fitter that his unjust debtor, and not he himself, should put up with it. And, certainly, common sense cries aloud that the guilty one who has caused the damage, not the innocent person on whom it has been inflicted, should be the sufferer.

76. Others ground their inability to pay on their want of means wherewith to satisfy the demands of justice. But if the Director looks into the matter, he will find that the same people find no lack of money to spend in gratifying their vanity and indulging their gluttony. They have plenty to squander in gambling, and even, at times, in ministering to their lust. Let him tell such to retrench all superfluous expenses, and rather to keep somewhat within the limits of strict necessity, as thus they will be enabled to pay their just debts, and to make restitution for the wrongs which they have done, and, in a word, restore whatever they have acquired unjustly; for if they can deceive the minister of God with an "I cannot," they will most assuredly not hoodwink the all-seeing God Himself.

77. If the penitent be one who is frugal in his expenditure, and does not indulge in exorbitant purchases of superfluities, the Confessor will warn him to restore by instalments whatever he is unable to pay back in one sum, since justice and God alike impose this grave obligation upon every debtor. What would he do if his door was blocked up by an immense heap of stones which prevented his entering? It is certain that he would remove them to another place, so as to leave the passage free. But how would he go about removing them? Think you that he would endeavour to lift the whole mass at once, and set it down elsewhere? This would be impossible, even had he the strength of Samson. No; he would begin by degrees to remove first one stone and then another, until, in a short time, the way into his house would be clear. Let him do the like to clear his conscience, and relieve it from the heavy burden of ill-gotten goods which weigh it down. If he cannot restore all at once, let him

give back a little at a time, and by such means he will soon have satisfied justice, discharged his conscience, and secured the salvation of his own soul.

78. In a word, the Director must endeavour deeply to imprint in the minds and hearts of such persons the maxim current amongst theologians, namely, that the grievous wounds inflicted on justice and our own soul, cannot heal until satisfaction be made to justice by a full and complete restitution.* The debtor may go to Confession again and again, detest and weep over his sins with scalding tears, lamenting the injustice which he has committed; but his tears will flow in vain. His penitence will be a mere fiction, until he brings himself to the point of repairing, by restitution, the losses occasioned by his unjust deeds. It is thus that St. Augustine sums up the matter.†

79. Fourth suggestion. From what has been said and, still more, from the long experience his ministry will afford him, the Director must be thoroughly convinced that but few restitutions are made. I would have him convinced, however, of another truth, which is, that of the restitutions which are made, many are not made as God's law requires they should be made, nor are they such as fully compensate for the violation of the virtue of justice. I will explain my meaning. Many there are whose hands are full of ill-gotten gains :—they might restore them wholly, or in part, but they go on delaying this act of restitution without any just cause. Still they live at peace with themselves, unmolested with scruples, because, having the will to make restitution, they think that they have, by this very fact, fully complied with every claim of justice and of their own conscience. Such as these live in a permanent state of grievous sin, and of continued injustice to their neighbours. The reason of which is obvious. The precept of restitution, though partly affirmative, inasmuch as it positively imposes the duty of making good the wrong we have done, is also partly negative, inasmuch as it forbids the unjust detention of what belongs to another person. Now it is

* Non remittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum.

† Si res aliena propter quam peccatum est, cum reddi possit, non redditur, pœnitentia non agitur, sed fingitur. Epist. 54 ad Macedon.

unquestionable that a negative precept binds at every moment to the observance of its prescriptions; and hence, whoever disregards it, sins against it continually. One living in concubinage, for instance, is ever urged by the negative precept which forbids keeping his paramour, and he sins continually as long as he does not send her away from his house. In like manner, the unjust and rapacious man is constantly under the rigorous command of justice, which forbids us to retain what belongs to another; and this he is constantly transgressing, and consequently is always sinning, so long as he fails to give back his ill-gotten gains when able to restore them.

80. This may be illustrated by an instance related by Surius in the life of St. Medard.* A peasant stole from the Saint an ox, which had a bell hung round its neck, drove it into his stable, and locked the door in order to hide his theft. But though the beast stood quiet and motionless at the manger, the bell nevertheless kept ever ringing. The thief, dreading discovery, took the bell from the animal's neck and placed it on the ground, but it still kept ringing. He then filled it with hay, but it still continued to ring: he shut it up in a box, and in the box it still rang. Affrighted at so manifest a prodigy, he restored the ox to St. Medard. As soon as it had been returned to its master, the bell ceased to give its sound. Now the like happens to those who soil their hands with ill-gotten goods: justice, as with a clamorous bell that refuses to be silenced, ever causes to resound within them its rigorous precept, "Keep not what belongs to others." To free themselves from this annoyance, some will perhaps go to Confession, and then, again and again, return to confess the same sin; but because they hold back from making restitution, justice, indignant at their guilty delay, continues to proclaim to their loaded conscience its prohibition, *Do not keep what belongs to another;* and justice will never cease to make herself heard until the property be restored to its lawful owner, nor will she ever allow rest to be the portion of the conscience that is obstinate in sin. The Director will inculcate this lesson on these dishonest persons; else their very restitutions, before they are actually made, will be

* Die 8 Junii.

preceded by countless acts of injustice resulting from an overlong delay.

81. The Director will meet with others who think, by some Masses, or by a few alms-deeds, to repair the wrongs which they have done their neighbours, although they know full well the persons whom they have injured by their unjust doings; and, what is worse still, he will find that there are Confessors who sanction and even impose such irrational restitution. Such as these are to be taught that Masses and alms-deeds, according to the Angelic Doctor, may be a fitting compensation when we know not, and cannot discover the persons whom we have wronged; but not so when these latter are known, and have every claim to the goods which we have unjustly taken.* The goods of others have, as was remarked above, a voice which ever cries to the heart of him who is unjustly possessed of them, demanding to be returned to their master.† Even if the thief distribute to the poor the riches of Crœsus and the treasures of Solomon, he will not silence this voice, which ever calls upon him to make restitution to the owner.

82. We have a notable instance in the case of Zaccheus, that true model of contrition and conversion in a covetous man. Scarce had our Divine Redeemer set foot in his house, when, enlightened by that sacred Presence, he resolved forthwith to make full restitution of all the ill-gotten gains which had accrued to him in the course of his dealings. He began by setting forth his intention of giving to the poor the half of his goods in satisfaction due to unknown persons.‡ He next bound himself to make restitution to the individuals whom he was conscious of having defrauded.§ Not content with returning as much as he owed, and as the creditor might justly claim, he engaged to make good fourfold every injustice he had been guilty of in his transactions. Hence our Blessed Saviour, seeing him fulfil in so perfect a manner the duty of restitution, assured him that on that

* 2, 2, qu. 62, art. 5.
† Res clamat ad dominum.
‡ Ecce dimidium bonorum meorum do pauperibus.
§ Et si quid aliquem defraudavi reddo quadruplum.

day he had brought salvation to his soul.* Let him who has burdened his conscience with another man's goods follow Zaccheus in his mode of making restitution, if he would save his soul and attain to high perfection.

83. The Director will meet with others who would like to make restitution without taking a single penny out of their purses. "Father," they say, "I will hear Masses, offer my Communions, say many Rosaries for my creditor's soul." The Director may ask of such, what they would think of a debtor of theirs who, instead of laying down the hundred crowns due to them from him, would offer up many Communions and prayers for the good of their souls. They would surely tell him as plainly as possible, that they want, not his prayers, but the money which belongs to them. So, too, the Confessor may reply, "Your creditor cares not for your prayers, but wants what belongs to him;" for, of a truth, pious deeds, being spiritual goods of a wholly distinct order, are out of proportion with, and cannot compensate, the wrong done to our neighbour in his worldly possessions.

84. Fifth suggestion. The Director will not be too ready to give credence to the promises of those who assure him that they will restore ill-gotten goods, and make compensation for the harm done. Before absolving them he will require of them to fulfil the obligations of justice, and this especially in two cases. First, when they have already broken their promises to other Confessors on the same matters; for this breach of faith renders them fit objects of suspicion. Secondly, when they have still by them the thing itself, or the sum of money unjustly acquired; for when what is stolen has been made away with, restitution becomes more difficult. To conclude, restitution may be likened to certain fruits which have failed to ripen in the autumn, and afterwards, when the winter cold comes on, they never lose their sourness. Just so, if, while in the fervent state to which they are roused by the Sacrament of Penance, these persons fail to complete their restitutions, and to make full compensation, they will soon be overtaken by the ungenial temperature of their bad habits, and they will neglect altogether to fulfil their obligation.

* Hodie salus huic domui a Deo facta est. Luc. xix.

ARTICLE III.

The Third Cardinal Virtue—Fortitude.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS VIRTUE IN ITS ESSENCE.

85. Among the Moral Virtues some are called Cardinal, because they are the hinges on which all the other virtues turn, and by which they are regulated, and because they are the foundations on which all virtues rest. The reader must not be astonished at my going back to give the etymology of the name in this place, when it might seem that I should have furnished it at the very outset of the present Section. I have placed it here on purpose, since having now understood what constitutes the two principal Cardinal Virtues, Prudence and Justice, he will more readily understand what is the special function of them all, and the meaning of their name.

86. Prudence is a cardinal virtue on this account: it directs reason to a right determination concerning the particular acts of all other virtues. Justice is a cardinal virtue, because by it reason is guided in establishing due equality in the relations of social life, whence it is the groundwork of all the virtues which regard our neighbour. But because reason has many hindrances to surmount in the performance of its acts, which should be reasonable and virtuous, it needs the aid of two other cardinal virtues in order to make head against such hindrances. Now, these hindrances are of a twofold nature. They are either difficulties which deter the reason, or pleasures by which it is perverted. Reason, therefore, stands in need of two fundamental virtues in order to be rendered firm and constant against what is arduous and difficult, and to keep it bridled against the allurements of what is delightful. These two virtues are Fortitude and Temperance.

The former steadies the will, nerving it against the hardships and difficulties so frequently to be met with in the practice of the virtues; while the latter renders it proof against those sensual delights which are so often in opposition with the right dictates of virtue. We may hence conclude that Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance are the ruling principles of all the moral virtues: the first, because it causes them to follow what is right in their several actions; the second, because it establishes in them a due equality; the third, because it strengthens the soul against what is arduous; the last, because it secures to it moderation in the enjoyments prejudicial to the practice of virtue. For these reasons, therefore, are they called cardinal virtues—that is the bases and foundations of all other virtues.

87. Having premised this much, we now come to the definition of the virtue of Fortitude, to which Temperance must yield place; as, according to St. Thomas, the dread of pain is a greater obstacle in the path of virtue than the love of pleasure.* And in order not to form a confused notion, at the very outset, of this cardinal virtue, it must be borne in mind (to quote St. Thomas again), that fortitude may be taken both in a very wide and in a very restricted sense. By fortitude may be meant that constancy whereby we overcome the usual difficulties to be met with in the practice of all the virtues, and by which we hold fast to them. In this sense fortitude is not a cardinal virtue, but a general quality common to all virtues, and an essential condition of their activity. The reason is plain. There is no virtue but what has to encounter some difficulties in its practice. Thus, the obedient man feels a repugnance in going counter to the inclinations of his will in order to subject it to that of another. The humble man, in submitting himself first to one of his fellows and then to another, feels a shrinking from overcoming the natural propensity of every human being to hold the first place. The same holds good of every other virtue. Now, to be thus firm and unmoved by these ordinary difficulties, not allowing them to make us swerve from

* Unde inter virtutes cardinales est prior Prudentia, secunda Justitia, tertia Fortitudo, quarta Temperantia, et post has ceteræ virtutes. 2, 2, quæst. 123, art. 12.

the right path, is not a special virtue, but a quality belonging to all the virtues, as Aristotle teaches.* St. Prosper alludes to fortitude in this acceptation when he says :—"Strength of soul (that is, in a wide and general sense) is shown when a man remains unmoved, though tried by various troubles, and yields not to the allurements of any pleasure."†

88. Fortitude may be taken in another and stricter sense, when it has to encounter difficulties which severely task our endurance, such as are really great evils; and then it renders the soul firm and steady under them, or prompt in rejecting them when it is proper so to do. In this latter acceptation fortitude forms one of the cardinal virtues, and holds the third place among them. St. Thomas speaks as follows :—"Evils, when imminent, and on the point of assailing us, excite within us fear, which is the more intense in proportion as these evils are the greater. And fear being a passion most mighty to subdue our hearts, and to withdraw them from good when this is surrounded by difficulties, the special function of this cardinal virtue of fortitude is to restrain fear, particularly when it rises to a high degree through the prospect of some terrible calamity; and it has also for its office to render us firm and dauntless, so that we turn not our backs upon virtue, and flee not to the arms of the opposite vices.‡

89. We have a remarkable instance of this virtue in the noble action of the glorious martyr Barlaam, related by Baronius.§ A tyrant seeing the martyr proof against flattery, unmoved by threats, and unconquered by the most cruel tortures, bethought himself that he might win a victory over the hand at least of this

* Ad virtutem requiritur firmiter, et immobiliter operari. Ethic., lib. ii., cap. 4.

† Animi fortitudo ea debet intelligi, quæ non solùm diversis pulsata molestiis inconcussa permanet; sed etiam nullis voluptatum illecebris resoluta succumbit. Lib. iij., cap. 20.

‡ Alio modo potest accipi fortitudo, secundum quod importat firmitatem animi in sustinendis et repellendis his in quibus maximè difficile est firmitatem habere, scilicet in aliquibus periculis gravibus. . . . Et sic fortitudo ponitur specialis virtus, utpote materiam determinatam habens. Quæst. cit. art. 2.

§ Baron. Ex S. Basilii Orat. in Barlaam, tom. ij. Annal. A.D. 304.

invincible hero, whose heart within was so safe from his attacks. He therefore ordered an altar to be placed before the statue of Jupiter, and a large fire to be kindled upon it; then he commanded his officers to stretch open the martyr's hand over the flames, and, after putting incense into his palm, to leave him at liberty. The barbarous tyrant fancied that the Confessor of Christ would be unable to bear up against the scorching heat of the fire that was burning beneath his hand, and that, overcome by the sharpness of the pain, he would, by moving his hand, be forced to give to the idol the homage of those perfumes which he had refused to offer of his own free choice. Meanwhile, the burning coals cast forth their sparks under the martyr's hand; the flames crackled around it, roasting and consuming it; but they did not in the least shake his constancy: for, as Baronius remarks, this invincible hand would not yield to the raging fire nor ever flinch, but resisted the violence of its burning, unmoved and undaunted.* Thus did it remain the conqueror of the fierce element which overcomes and softens iron, melts the hardest metals, and reduces the very rocks to powder. This was indeed an instance of the fortitude of which we are here treating. If St. Barlaam had done nothing else but suffer a blow, a scoff, or some insult, for his steadfastness in the faith, he would have shown more than that common and every-day fortitude which may be discerned in the exercise of any virtue. But, to hold the hand without moving, over a burning fire and amid devouring flames, rather than do anything which might appear a sign of offering sacrilegious worship to a false god, is something exceptionally difficult and requiring a special fortitude.

90. The Angelic Doctor adds, that a particular function of fortitude is to steel the soul against the dread of death: since it is proper to the brave man to be dauntless in presence of the greatest evils, because, these being overcome, lesser ones cannot prevail over his firmness. Now, it is indisputable that of all evils death is the most terrible, as at one stroke it strips us of all temporal goods; hence, to fortitude does it especially belong to

* Perduravit illa, cineris instar, flammam ferens, tergum sævienti igni non dedit, quemadmodum fugitivi, et imbelles solent; sed immota perstitit.

make us imperturbable even in the view of death.* And thus our Saviour would have all His followers to be brave soldiers, exhorting us not to fear the terrific countenance of death when it threatens us; and He alleges as the motive of such intrepidity, that the momentary and passing loss of this life ought not to be an object of fear to a soul endued with fortitude, which should fear nothing but the death which is eternal.†

91. Encouraged by these words of Jesus Christ, thousands, ay, millions upon millions, of brave heroes have, for the love of Him, allowed their flesh and limbs to be torn piecemeal, and have laid down their lives. Millions and millions of martyrs have gone to meet death, amid darts and swords, on the rack, under the axe, on red-hot gridirons, in raging furnaces, and amid countless other cruel torments.‡ It is enough to observe that, as Tertullian witnesses, whole towns full of Christians presented themselves to be slaughtered, out of devotion to the holy faith. Arrius Antoninus, as we learn from the same writer, having stirred up a fierce persecution in Asia, all the Christians of the city in which he resided, went in one body to his tribunal, in order to lay down their lives. He sent some few of them to prison, and to the mass he exclaimed, "Wretches! if die you must, are there not precipices and ropes in abundance?"§ In a word, as St. Jerome says, to die for their Redeemer's sake was, in those bright days, not so

* Oportet quod fortitudo animi dicatur, quæ firmiter retinet voluntatem hominis in bono rationis contra maxima mala; quia qui stat firmus contra majora, consequens est quod sit firmus contra minora, sed non convertitur. . . . Maxime autem terribile inter omnia corporalia mala est mors, quæ tollit omnia corporalia bona. 2, 2, quæst. 123, art. 4.

† Nolite timere eos, qui occidunt corpus . . . sed timete eum, qui potest animam, et corpus perdere in gehennam. Matth. x. 28.

‡ Alii verò ludibria, et verbera experti, insuper et vincula, et carceres: lapidati sunt, secti sunt, tentati sunt, in occisione gladii mortui sunt, circuierunt in melotis, in pellibus caprinis, egentes, angustiati, afflicti, quibus dignus non erat mundus; in solitudinibus errantes, in montibus et speluncis, et in cavernis terræ. Ad. Heb. xj. 36, et seq.

§ Arrius Antoninus in Asiâ cum persequeretur instanter, omnes illius civitatis Christiani ante tribunal se manu factâ obtulerunt. Cum ille, paucis duci jussis, reliquis ait, "O miseri, si cupitis perire, præcipitia, et restes habetis!" Lib. ad Scapulam Præsidem, cap. 5.

much an object of dread as of longing and eager desire.* Such is the fortitude which becomes a champion of Christ.

92. Having thus explained that the first act of fortitude consists in a certain steadfastness or dauntlessness of soul in facing formidable evils, we next proceed to the consideration of the second act of this virtue, which is a certain courage in being beforehand with the occasion of such evils, whenever prudence dictates that we should do so, for the security either of ourselves or of others. In such cases, fear being put aside, fortitude has for its proper office to keep daring within due bounds, and to prevent its going too far. This may be seen in military courage, which has so many honourable and virtuous points about it. A general may give proof of bravery, either by courageously bearing atrocious tortures at the hands of his foes for the public weal, as was the case with the far-famed Regulus, who going to meet a most lingering death for his country's sake was placed by his enemies naked in a barrel, which was studded with sharp nails that pierced him in every portion of his body. Or again, a brave captain may rush upon the swords of the enemy, running countless risks of death to defend his fellow-citizens, as is constantly done by brave soldiers in just wars. In this case, fortitude makes use of anger as its ally in carrying through its undertakings; for this being an ardent passion, renders man brave amid danger. Observe, however, that it employs anger not as a master, but as a servant; it regulates and tempers the heat of passion, as well as the boldness it inspires, in order to preserve it from excess and to keep it within the bounds marked out by virtue. Thus did the valiant David, armed with a single sling, go to encounter the giant Goliath, who inspired the whole army of Israel with such terror; and, while yet a stripling, he faced the lions that lay in wait for his flock and strangled them in his iron grasp.† Nor was this boldness of his fool-hardy; because it was aided by a power from on high, which warranted him in looking for a favourable result to such enterprises.

* Voto tunc Christianis erat pro Christi nomine gladio percuti. Initio Vitæ Paul. Eremitæ.

† I. Reg. xvij. 34.

93. Nor is Seneca to be followed on this point, who is of opinion that, in its undertakings, reason stands in need of nothing beyond itself, and that it is folly to say that it has at times to call in anger to help it to carry certain difficult undertakings to a successful issue.* For, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, the passions, when controlled by our reason, far from being contrary to it, afford it a stay and support, and, by their sensible motions, render obedience to it easy and sweet.† Thus, if anger and courage be modified by reason, they are of the greatest assistance to fortitude in its conflict with grievous and imminent dangers. Wherefore the Royal Prophet had reason to say, *Be angry, and sin not.* Be angry, that is, with such moderation as may keep your anger from those excesses by which it becomes sinful.‡ Hence this same holy Doctor concludes, that the brave man does not make use of an ill-regulated anger and of the outbursts of an intemperate passion, but only of that anger and boldness which owns the control of reason, in order to the performance of the courageous acts by which he rids himself of great evils, vigorously attacking that by which they are produced.§

94. We may here conclude that fortitude has a twofold function. First; To steel the heart under the infliction of evils which are really formidable (which it does by restraining fear) and to keep the soul firm and steady under the onslaught of such evils. Secondly; To invigorate the soul, so that it may repel these evils by an energetic aggression of that which is their cause or source. Now, for this end, it is served by anger and boldness, tempered, however, by the dictates of reason. This teaching is wholly borrowed from St. Thomas, and I will now give illustrations of it from Holy Writ.

95. The Israelites, alarmed by the reports of the spies returning from the Promised Land, who told them they would there have to fight whole nations of a most warlike race, and that the

* Ad res gerendas satis est per se ipsam ratio, et stultum est, hanc ab iracundia petere præsidium. Lib. i., De Irâ, cap. 10.

† 2, 2, quæst. 123, art. 10.

‡ Irascimini, et nolite peccare. Psal. iv. 5.

§ Iram moderatam assumit fortis ad suum actum, non autem iram immoderatam.

land contained large cities strongly fortified, began to murmur against the Lord, and against Moses their leader. Joshua and Caleb, in order to cheer the disheartened multitude, began to say, "O people of Israel, fear not the inhabitants of the land to which we are approaching, because we shall consume them all even as bread is consumed. God is with us. From them God has departed. Take courage then, and fear them not."* We have here the first act of fortitude, which drives out all fear, and renders the soul dauntless in the presence of great dangers. On another occasion, Caleb addressed the people, and to encourage them said, "Let us go up at once, O Israelites; let us fight boldly and gain possession of this rich and fertile country: we have the strength to conquer it."† This is the second function of fortitude, which spurs us on to encounter our antagonists with boldness, yet with a boldness regulated by discretion, which proportions the effort to the resistance to be overcome.

96. The widely-renowned Judith went forth from Bethulia, taking as her only escort a timid handmaiden, to act rather as a companion required by her modesty than as champion to defend her weakness. She enters the enemy's camp, is met by the sentinels, is arrested, and made to give account of the object of her visit; yet amid these fearful perils she remained undaunted. She passes onward through the squadrons of soldiers, beholds the blood-stained weapons, the pitiless countenances of the foe, but without fear or trembling or blenching; nor can the sight of so many objects of terror change the colour or the comeliness of her face. It was surely no small thing for a weak and defenceless woman to pass through the midst of so many dangers, with her heart devoid of fear. At length she reaches the tent of the cruel Holofernes, where she unsheathes the sword, lays hold of him, strikes the blow, and severs his head from his body. Great was her enterprise, dauntless her courage, yet it was not excessive, for it was animated by a lively trust in God

* Neque timeatis populum terræ hujus, quia sicut panem ita eos possumus devorare. Recessit ab eo omne præsidium. Dominus nobiscum est, nolite timere. Num. xiv. 9.

† Ascendamus, et possideamus terram, quoniam poterimus obtinere eam. Num. xiij. 31.

which made her feel assured of the victory.* Nothing, then, was wanting to this great heroine to render heroic the feat which she performed for the defence of her country, its laws and its religion.

97. I pass over many other signal instances of fortitude recorded in the inspired pages, and will content myself with dwelling on the conduct of the Machabean martyrs when brought before King Antiochus, owing to their obedience to their religion, and in order to bear witness to their holy faith; and that it may stand out in bolder relief before the reader's eyes, I will borrow the very words which St. Gregory of Nazianzus puts into the mouths of these generous champions, as they were defying the tyrant's rage. "Think not, cruel monster, to force us to yield. We are the disciples of that Eleazar whose courage wearied thy cruelty, as thou to thine own despite didst find. Our father has, ere this, bravely struggled against thy ferocity, and has worsted it; his children will show the like courage in the fight. The Priest has died a glorious death; we, too, will lay down our lives as victims, and rivals of his valour. Think not to frighten us with the multitude of thy tortures, for we are ready to suffer far more than even thy cruelty can invent. Proud, haughty tyrant! do thy worst; thy threats are powerless against men ready to undergo all manner of tortures, and death itself in its most frightful form."† These generous champions, after having given proof of a marvellous courage in defying the most horrible torments and the cruel death that was already prepared for them, turned to the executioners, not, indeed, to escape from such terrible sufferings (as we have shown may be done in other cases, without detracting from fortitude), but, by a rare example of courage, to provoke them to strike more fiercely, and to spur

* Apprehendit comam capitis ejus, et ait, Confirma me, Domine Deus, in hâc horâ, et percussit bis cervicem ejus. Judith. x., et seq.

† Eleazari discipuli sumus, cujus tu fortitudinem perspectam, exploratam habes. Pater prior decertavit, decertabunt postea filii. Abscessit sacerdos, sequentur victimæ. Multarum quidem rerum terrorem nobis injicere tentas; verum ad plura parati sumus. Quid autem nobis, vir superbe atque insolens, minis istis tuis facies? Quos cruciatus inferes? Nihil his hominibus fortius, qui ad quidvis perferendum prompto, et alacri sunt animo. Orat. 32, De Machab.

them on to the fulfilment of their sanguinary purposes. "How now, executioners! wherefore do ye tarry? Where are the fetters, the brands, the hatchet? Here are our hands, our necks, our breasts. Bind, strike, butcher us! The beasts are too pitiful, the flames too slow; let others more cruel be brought to devour us. Redouble the heat of the fires which are to consume us. Let all our torments be your choicest, and reserved for us alone."* Thus did they speak; and with the same undaunted courage did they all lay down even their lives amid the most atrocious sufferings. A more illustrious instance of fortitude cannot, to my thinking, be found, or even imagined.

CHAPTER II.

DEGREES OF PERFECTION BELONGING TO FORTITUDE.

98. In contemplating a likeness painted by the hand of a skilful artist, we first, with a comprehensive glance, take in, and find pleasure from, the whole subject; then, with increased gratification, we study the perfection of the details, the beauty of the countenance, the posture of the body, the arrangement of the limbs, the folds of the dress, the naturalness of the gestures, the relief given by the effects of light and shade to every portion. In like manner, having in the foregoing Chapter cast a general and confused glance at the lineaments of fortitude, we now proceed to consider the several degrees of the perfection wherewith it is adorned, the integral portions, so to speak, of so beauteous a form; not so much for the pleasure of gazing upon it, as for the fruit to be gained by making it our own.

99. The first degree of fortitude is to mortify every passion, to keep under all our vices, to despise pleasure, and to practise every

* Quid cunctamini carnifices? Quid moras nectitis? Quid benignum, et suave jussum exspectatis? Ubi gladii? ubi vincula? Festinationem requiro. Ignis major accendatur; acriores bestiæ, magisque actuosæ producantur; exquisitiora tormenta producantur; sint omnia regia et magnifica.

virtue with firmness and constancy. This is the view which Lactantius takes, when, having recounted the labours of Hercules, he concludes by saying:—"The labours of Hercules were, indeed, feats of prowess, but still they were the actions of a mere man. For to slay the hydra, to strangle lions, to rout the Amazons, to shoot the foul birds that wasted Arcadia, and his other valiant deeds, were only works proper to a frail mortal and hence should not be too highly esteemed, as there is nothing—according to Cicero's remark—but must yield to the force of arms. But to conquer one's self, to control anger (which Hercules did not do) belongs only to a man of eminent fortitude. Whoever does this, not only do I put him on a par with heroes, but I regard him as most like unto God. Lactantius adds, that the Roman Orator, in tracing the portrait of the man he considered most like unto God, should not have omitted also his victory over lust, luxury, love of gold, and every other unruly passion; for, in real truth, he who overcomes a roaring lion is not to be looked upon as braver than he who curbs his anger—that fierce untamable beast which has its lurking in our innermost soul. He who brings down the rapacious birds that pillage the fields, is surpassed by him who keeps under the appetites which tyrannise over our hearts; he who defeats a warlike Amazon, is inferior to him who conquers lust, the sworn foe of chastity and honour.* In a word, Lactantius, agreeing with the celebrated Roman Orator, lays down that greater fortitude is shown in subduing the unruly inclinations of our own souls, than in overcoming lions, tigers, monsters, Amazons, and the most valiant antagonists which formed the

* Opera sunt ista fortis viri, hominis tamen. Illa enim, quæ vicit, fragilia et mortalia fuerunt. Nulla enim tanta vis, ut ait Orator, quæ non ferro debilitari, frangique possit. At animum vincere, iracundiam cohibere, fortissimi est, quæ ille nec fecit umquam, nec potuit. Hæc qui facit, non modo ego eum cum summis viris comparo, sed simillimum Deo judico. (Cic. pro Marcel.) Vellem adjecisset de libidine, luxuriâ, cupidate, insolentiâ, ut virtutem ejus impleret, quem similem Deo judicabat. Non enim fortior judicandus est qui leonem, quam qui violentam in se inclusam feram superat iracundiam, aut qui rapacissimas volucres dejicit, quam qui cupiditates avidissimas coercet: aut qui amazonem bellatricem, quam qui libidinem vincit, pudoris, et famæ debellatricem. Lib. i., De Instit., cap. 9.

boast of the heroes of antiquity. And this is in perfect accordance with what the Holy Ghost says: *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he who takes a city.**

100. Nor is it fair to object here to what I have stated in the foregoing Chapter, that to overcome the difficulties besetting the path of virtue is ordinary fortitude, not that especial virtue which shines resplendent among the cardinal virtues. Because, what I there said applies to such difficulties as are of common occurrence in the practice of the several virtues which have nothing arduous in them. But if we come to speak of surmounting all the obstacles that may be encountered in acquiring every virtue, in the detaching one's self from every pleasure, in the uprooting of every vice, this is an arduous and most difficult thing, which few attain to; hence it requires a cardinal and sturdy fortitude. St. Gregory the Great says as much:—"What can be imagined that demands more courage than to bring under subjection to the soul our every unruly motion; to bridle with all the energy of the spirit every appetite of the flesh, to go counter to our self-will, to despise all visible things, and to value nothing but what is unseen and heavenly?"† St. Ambrose teaches the same doctrine. "And in every deed," he writes, "that alone is true fortitude whereby a man overcomes himself, checks anger, yields not to the seductions of any pleasure, is not troubled by adversity, or puffed up by prosperity; whereby he does not allow himself to be tossed about by the ever-changing winds of human vicissitudes."‡

101. If, then, a man persevere for the space of many years, until an extreme old age, in this continual self-denial, in a hard, penitential, mortified course of life, he will give still greater proof

* Melior est patiens viro forti: et qui dominatur animo suo expugnatore urbium. Prov. xvj. 32.

† Quid fortius, quam omnes animi sui motus rationi subjicere, omnia carnis desideria spiritûs virtute frænare, proprias voluntates abjicere, contemptis visibilibus, ea quæ non videntur amare? In Psal. Pœnit., Psal. 2.

‡ Revera jure ea fortitudo vocatur, quando unusquisque se ipsum vincit, iram continet, nullis illecebris emollitur, atque inflectitur, non adversis perturbatur, non extollitur secundis, et quasi vento quodam variarum rerum non circumfertur mutatione. De Officiis, Lib. i., cap. 36.

of his being thoroughly rooted in that fortitude of which we are discoursing; since it is impossible to continue for any length of time in an unwearying mortification of the spirit and the flesh, without the powerful help of this robust virtue. And in fact, St. Athanasius, in his Life of St. Antony the Abbot, infers from his constancy the greatness of his fortitude. "You may gather from this how great a servant of God was Antony, who, from his childhood to decrepit old age, ever kept up the same fervour and earnestness in his striving after protection, ; never yielding to declining years in allowing himself more dainty food, never indulging his waning vigour by clothing his worn-out body in softer garments.*

102. The next degree of fortitude is to risk our life for the spiritual or temporal welfare of our neighbours. Christ says, *Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friend.*† Because, to lay down our life for the sake of others is a most arduous thing and, consequently, it is at once a token of ardent love and an act of great courage. This charity and fortitude are shown by those who devote themselves to the service of the plague-stricken; thus exposing themselves to manifest peril of taking the infection and meeting their death. Such, too, are they who go to preach the faith in distant and barbarous lands: as St. Francis Xavier, and countless others both before and after him, who, in their zeal for extending the Kingdom of Christ by the conquest of many souls, have crossed the stormy ocean on their way to the New World, and were ever surrounded by countless perils of death, both by land and sea, as St. Paul tells us that he was himself.‡ All these particular acts of fortitude are detailed by the Angelic Doctor, and, in general, he accounts it

* Et hinc colligite, quantus vir Dei Antonius fuerit, qui ab adolescentiâ usque ad tam grandem ætatem idem studium acre, promptumque in asceticâ servavit, nec senectuti lautiorem cibum desiderando succubuerit, nec amissis corporis viribus indumentum mutaverit.

† Majorem hâc dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis. Joan. xv. 13.

‡ In itineribus sæpe, periculis fluminum, periculis ex gentibus, periculis in civitate, periculis in solitudine, periculis in mari, periculis in falsis fratribus, II. ad Cor. xj. 26.

as one of the most illustrious deeds of this virtue to expose ourselves to death for the advantage of another.* Hence, too, he ranges in the list of acts which give proof of a special fortitude, the conduct of a judge, or of any private person, who prefers the risk of imminent death to taking any part in the perversion of justice.†

103. The third degree of fortitude is to expose ourselves courageously to martyrdom. If that person be brave who shrinks not from the danger of death, braver far is he who quails not at its presence, but goes forward fearlessly to meet it, especially for the sublime end of witnessing to his fidelity to Christ, and to the holy faith of Christ. Admirable herein was the courage of the holy martyr Ignatius, who, having been condemned to be devoured by the beasts in the Roman Amphitheatre, writes as if he had been going to a triumph :—"I earnestly long for the wild beasts that await me, which I heartily desire may soon dispatch me; I will entice them to devour me wholly and suddenly, and not to serve me as they have done some whom they were afraid to touch. If they are unwilling to meddle with me, I will even compel them to it; I will force them to devour me."‡ "Let fire, or the cross, wild beasts, or breaking of bones, loss of limbs, the shattering in pieces of my whole body, and all the torments of the devil come upon me, so I may but attain to Christ."§

104. Nor are the times nearer to us wanting in instances of the

* Fortitudo proprie est circa pericula mortis, quæ est in bello; sed circa pericula cujuscumque alterius mortis fortis bene se habet, præsertim quia et cujuscumque mortis homo potest periculum subire propter virtutem; puta cum aliquis non refugit amico infirmanti obsequi propter timorem mortiferæ infectionis; vel cum non refugit, itinerari ad aliquod pium negotium prosequendum, propter timorem naufragii, vel latronum. 2, 2, quæst. 123, art. 5.

† Cum aliquis judex, vel etiam privata persona non recedit a justo judicio timore gladii imminentis, vel cujuscumque periculi, etiam si sit mortiferum.

‡ Utinam, fruar bestiis, quæ mihi sunt paratæ, quas et oro mihi veloces esse ad interitum et ad supplicia, et allici ad comedendum me, ne sicut aliorum, non audeant corpus meum attingere. Quod si venire noluerint, ego vim faciam ego me ingeram ut devorer.

§ Ignis, crux, bestiæ, confractio ossium, membrorum divisio, et totius corporis contritio, et tormenta diaboli in me veniant, tantùm ut Christo fruar. S. Hieron., Lib. de Scriptor. Eccles.

like fortitude. Bishop Fisher, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, on arriving at the place of execution to which he had been condemned by the wicked tyrant, Henry VIII., king of England, on account of his constancy in making profession of the true faith, coming in sight of the stern countenance of the executioner and of the glitter of his axe, far from moaning or complaining or flinching, was filled with a heavenly joy, and intoning with a loud voice the hymn of thanksgiving and triumph, the *Te Deum*, he showed thereby that he had attained the term of all his desires.* Many others, also, have there been who, amid the flames, have taken up live coals and placed them on their heads, glorying in their torments; or who, disengaging themselves from the hands of their executioners, have rushed headlong into the flames, eager to lay down their lives for Him who had given His life for them. Let the Scævolas and the Horatii, let Curtius, and those others so famed in Roman story as heroes of fortitude, come from their graves and tell us whether there ever was kindled in their breasts such readiness, such longing, such eager impatience to meet death for the passing glory of the world, as animated these and thousands of other heroes of Holy Church, who laid down their lives for the true glory of God.

105. The fourth degree of fortitude is to bear patiently with serious evils in unlooked-for vicissitudes; for, as Aristotle says, he is truly a brave man who is undaunted in the presence of death, or of other serious casualties, when happening unexpectedly,† since it is in these unforeseen emergencies which show that the soul is grounded in that habit of imperturbability wherein the virtue of fortitude consists. St. Thomas accounts for this by saying, that a habit works just like nature,‡ and in sudden emergencies there is no time to reflect, to take thought beforehand, or make provision against the evils that have surprised us; and then we either act imperfectly by the instinct of nature, or we act virtuously by the force of our habit. Hence, if we perform acts of

* Thom. Bosius. De Signis Ecclesiæ, lib. i., cap. 22, A.D. 1534.

† Is homo fortis proprie dicitur, qui circa honestam mortem, et ea omnia, quæ repente eveniunt, et afferunt illam, imperterritus est. Ethic., lib. iij.

‡ Habitus agit in modum naturæ.

fortitude, we give proof that we have attained both the habit and the virtue.

106. The fifth degree of fortitude is to undergo formidable evils with pleasure. This is the heroic degree of the virtue; for, as is well-known, heroism consists in doing with ease and delight what is most arduous in virtue. The Angelic Doctor distinguishes two delectations—one which is felt in the body, the other which is experienced in the soul.* Now, it is certain that amid scourges, axes, swords, furnaces, and flames, there can be no bodily delectation—this cannot co-exist with deadly pain—but there may be joy in the soul of one who is glad to suffer for the honour of his Divine Lord. Such was the case with Eleazar who, in the midst of torments, said, "I now endure sore pains in body, but in soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear Thee, O my God."† So, too, with the holy martyr Vincent, of whom St. Augustine says, "Such was the cruelty wherewith they tortured the limbs of this martyr, and such the calm and cheerfulness of which he gave proof in his words, that one might have fancied that one person was undergoing these atrocious torments, and another different person was speaking with so joyous a countenance."‡ St. Tiburtius also said that, while walking barefoot on a pavement covered with live coals, he seemed to himself to be passing over a soft bed of flowers. And besides these there are thousands upon thousands enrolled by Holy Church in the catalogue of her heroes, who, amid the most appalling torments, praised and blessed God, and who, by the gladness they showed in their countenances and the high-mindedness of which their words gave sign, were a torment to their torturers themselves.

107. But what may well seem more extraordinary still is, that in these heroic souls, the joy at suffering for God's sake became so

* Quæst. cit., art. 8.

† Duros corporis sustineo dolores; secundum animam vero, propter timorem tuum libenter hæc patior. II. Mach. vj. 30.

‡ Tanta grassabatur crudelitas in martyris corpore, et tanta tranquillitas proferebatur in voce, tantaque pœnarum asperitas sæviebat in membris, ut miro modo putares, Vincentio patiente, alium loquentem non torqueri. Serm. 1, De Mart. Vincent.

intense that they were insensible to their sufferings; or, if sensible to them, their torments were changed into an agreeable delight; as was the case with the Apostles, to whom their suffering of much ignominy occasioned not grief but gladness.* Among countless instances which I might allege, I select one more admirable than any other, as being that of a mere boy of tender years.† A young Spaniard called John, a native of Medina del Campo, was, at the age of twelve, made a slave by the Indians of Malabar, and given as a present to their king, who, on discovering the amiable character and the gentle disposition of his captive, conceived a great affection for him—an affection, however, most wicked and more ruinous far to its object than the most deadly hate; because this love induced the king to leave no artifice, no wiles untried, in order to withdraw the boy from the holy faith, and to win him over to the errors of the Koran. The first attempts made to overcome the constancy of the youth were splendid promises, especially that of giving to him in marriage the royal princess, a maiden of singular beauty; and in order to render him enamoured of her, she was made to appear before the young Spaniard decked out in all her most costly apparel. But finding that this first scheme availed not to shake the constancy of the young man, the king betook himself to threats, holding out to his captive the prospect of the most frightful torments, unless he yielded to his wishes. As the noble-hearted Christian showed his readiness to suffer everything rather than to turn rebel and traitor to his God, these menaces were at length put into execution. The barbarian ordered that the fingers of the youth should first be chopped off in small pieces, then his hands, then the arms and feet; and thus all the limbs were cut off little by little, with tortures so much the more cruel as they were more prolonged. And as the executioners, in fulfilling such cruel orders, implored the martyr, from time to time, to have pity on himself and to renounce Christ, the occasion, as they said, of such frightful torments to him, he replied with a cheerful countenance and a clear voice, that he had never yet

* Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii: quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati. Act. v. 41.

† Thom. Bosius, De Signis Ecclesiæ, lib. xi., cap. i., n. 6, A.D 1576.

tasted such heartfelt joy or so great sweetness of spirit. He had never wished for them to do otherwise than increase his tortures, as by so doing they could only heighten his consolations. Thus did this brave youth yield his soul to his Redeemer, I know not whether to say in unspeakable agonies, or in rapturous joys.

CHAPTER III.

MEANS OF ACQUIRING THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE.

108. THE first means is to ask it of God. This, it is true, is a universal means, since every virtue must needs be the gift of the Giver of all good ;* but it is no less true that it is a special means for acquiring the virtue of fortitude, both because it is a tree bearing many spiritual fruits, and which cannot grow in the soil of our frail nature unless it be planted there by the Heavenly Husbandman with His own hands ; and because God Himself tells us so, by the mouth of the Psalmist, " Have recourse to Me in the time of tribulation and of great affliction. I will give thee fortitude by which thou mayest escape from them, and I Myself shall be glorified."† And elsewhere, " By hoping in God, I shall rid my heart from whatever evil man can do to me."‡ And so too, " Be Thou, O Lord, protector of my life, that I may not fear ; that I may walk in dread of no man."§ And, in another place, " If whole armies rise up and wage war against me, my heart shall trust in Thee, O God, and shall not fear their assaults."‖ And again, " I will love Thee, my God, for Thou art my fortitude, my strength, my refuge, and my deliverer."¶ And again, " The Lord

* Omne datum optimum, et omne donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum. Jac. i. 17.

† Invoca me in die tribulationis : eruam te, et honorificabis me. Psal. xlix. 15.

‡ In Deo speravi, non timebo quid faciat mihi caro. Psal. lv. 5.

§ Dominus protector vitæ meæ : a quo trepidabo ? Psal. xxvj. 1.

‖ Si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum : si exurgat adversum me prælium, in hoc ego sperabo. Ibid., 3, 4.

¶ Diligam te, Domine, fortitudo mea ; Dominis firmamentum meum, et refugium meum, et liberator meus. Psal. xvij. 8.

is the fortitude of His people."* Once more, "Be Thou, O Lord, the guardian of my fortitude, because Thou art He that holds me from falling."† St. Augustine ably concludes from these passages that in times of sore trial our prayers should be addressed to God, from Whom comes our fortitude, and in Whom we may find rest in our toils, and solace in our grief.‡

109. Another means is to foresee hardships and trials and to welcome them beforehand, as through this manner of acting, fear gradually wears away, and even when difficulties occur which we have not expected or prepared for, we meet them undauntedly. The Angelic Doctor teaches that a long and frequent previous consideration of evils, in order to meet them with firmness of soul, is profitable to all, but especially to such as have not yet acquired the habit of fortitude.§ St. Ambrose most ably sets forth, and places beyond all doubt, the great utility of this means: "It belongs to a brave man not to shun the thought of serious misfortunes when they are imminent, but to forecast them in his mind, as from some high watch-tower, so as to descry them from afar ere they come upon us, and by means of a prudent foresight go forth to meet them; lest we be reduced to say, I am come to this plight from not believing that such misfortunes could possibly befall me. In a word, unless we forecast misfortune, it comes on us unawares and overwhelms us. As in war, there is no withstanding a foe who takes us by surprise and finds us unprepared for the battle, so that we must needs yield to his arms; in like manner, a soul that is not prepared by the prevision of evil, is far more easily overwhelmed.‖

* Dominus fortitudo plebis suæ. Psal. xxvij. 8.

† Fortitudinem meam ad te custodiam: quia Deus susceptor meus es. Psal. lviij. 10.

‡ Fortitudo tua Deus sit; firmitas tua Deus sit; exoratio tua ipse sit, laus tua ipse sit; in quo requiescas ipse sit; adjutorium cum laboras, ipse sit. In Psal. xxxij.

§ Potest autem aliquis etiam qui habitu fortitudinis caret, ex diuturnâ præmeditatione animum suum contra pericula præparare, quâ etiam præparatione fortis utitur, cum tempus adest. 2, 2, quæst. 120, art. 9.

‖ Fortis ergo est viri, non dissimulare cum aliquid immineat; sed prætendere, et tamquam explorare de speculâ quâdam mentis, et obviare cogitatione providâ rebus futuris; ne forte dicat postea: Ideo in ista incidi, quia non ar-

110. The reason of this is, that the fear against which fortitude arms us is a passion of the sensitive appetite, which is in dependence on the imagination, so far forth as this represents some object as prejudicial, hurtful, and unsuited to our nature, and so is felt keenly by this base passion. But when a man forecasts the evils that may befall him, and by supernatural considerations is enabled to discover how useful, advantageous and suitable they are, at least to reasonable nature, he forms a wholly different notion of it which, far from exciting emotions of fear, awakens feelings of delight and pleasure; as was the case with the heroic men whom we have lately been mentioning. The reader may learn from this how necessary it is to look forward to the trials and difficulties which may happen to us; and this we should do especially while conversing with God in prayer; and, moreover, we should convince ourselves by the teaching of divine faith how wholesome and advantageous troubles are to our souls, so that when the time of trial comes we may not be downcast, but receive all with courage and calmness.

111. A third means is to accustom ourselves to bear bravely the slight evil which may fall to our lot day by day; as hereby the soul ever increases in the firmness which is necessary to it under great trials. Clement of Alexandria says, that a rational person, who is ever in readiness to check the craven, fearful emotions of his heart by this practice of mortification, is sure to attain the very perfection of fortitude.* On the same account, we must not place reliance on the desires which certain unmortified persons express, of undergoing great sufferings, such as being called to martyrdom, enduring scoffs, injuries, insults, calumnies, scorn, and outrage; for he who is weak in bearing with slight evils will surely fail in courage when he has to face those which are serious and really formidable.

bitrabar posse evenire. Denique nisi explorentur adversa, cito occupant. Ut in bello improviso hostis vix sustinetur, et si imparatos inveniat, facile opprimit; ita animum mala inexplorata plus frangunt. Lib. i. De Off., cap. 38.

* Ei qui est cognitione præditus unâ cum cognitione augetur perfectio fortitudinis ex vitæ exercitatione, quæ est semper meditata vincere motus animi. Strom. 7.

112. A fourth means is frequently to ponder the fortitude wherewith Jesus Christ went forth to meet suffering, torments, and death. When our Redeemer heard the approach of the armed band which was being led on by the traitor Apostle, He did not flee to avoid capture, nor hide Himself from the enemies who were thirsting for His blood; but turning to the three Apostles whom He had taken with Him, said, "Arise! he that is to betray Me is at hand. Let us go forward to meet scourging, suffering, the cross, and death."* St. Peter expressly mentions that Jesus so readily accepted, and so undauntedly bore with, the most bitter torments of His passion, in order to set an example of fortitude, and to spur us on to imitate it.† This fortitude of our Saviour, in undergoing such atrocious sufferings, is what has encouraged so many youths of weakly complexion, so many of the frail sex, so many children of tender years, so many aged persons at the close of life; making them dauntless in the midst of swords, scourges, red-hot plates of metal, iron combs, wheels, axes, and countless other most cruel modes of torture; even, at times, causing them to rejoice, to shout for gladness and to triumph, amid the most frightful and appalling torments. With Christ Crucified before their eyes, these generous souls feared not the threats of tyrants, the fierce look of the torturers, the terrible sight of the sufferings borne by others.

113. Jerome Osorius relates‡ that Gonsalvez Vasquez, a man of noble character, a Moor by race, and a Mohammedan by religious profession, having discovered the falsehood of his sect, embraced the faith of Jesus Christ. After his conversion, he was taken prisoner while on a voyage at sea, and by a piece of bad—shall I say, of good?—fortune was made a slave by the Saracens. They being exceedingly incensed against him for having renounced the impious superstition of their false Prophet, resolved to avenge the slight thus put upon him by the most cruel tortures their ferocity could devise. They made him

* Surgite, eamus, ecce qui me tradet, prope est. Marc. xiv. 42.

† Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus. I. Pet. ij. 21.

‡ De Reb. Emanuel. Reg. Lusit., lib. x.

undergo a twofold martyrdom—once in the person of his son, the second time in his own person. They brought the innocent babe into his presence, and tore it piecemeal under his very eyes; while he, having steeled his heart by recalling to mind the sufferings of Christ, not only remained unmoved by a sight so horrible for a father to behold, but made use of the remembrance of our Blessed Lord's Passion to animate his child to suffer bravely for a Saviour's love. After having thus butchered the son, they proceeded to deprive the father of the little life that remained in him. They bound him to a post, and scourged him so unmercifully that his whole body was one uninterrupted wound; then for two whole days they gashed it by slow degrees, in order that he might die a lingering death, or rather that before expiring he might suffer the tortures of many deaths. In the meantime, as we learn from the historian, he never ceased calling upon the sweet Name of Jesus, and protesting that nothing more glorious could befall him than to die in torments for the love of Him Who for our redemption had endured the torments of the Cross.* His barbarous executioners, furious at hearing him continually repeat that holy Name, so hateful to their ears, and mention the Cross and sufferings of which they understood nothing, tore out his tongue. Being thus hindered from manifesting what was so deeply graven on his mind and heart by word of mouth, he continued to give outward sign of it by the expression of his countenance and the motion of his eyes. Thus keeping the Passion of Christ before his eyes, he breathed out his happy soul.

114. In a word, Jesus Christ was called by the Angels who came to receive Him on His triumphant entry into the Heavenly Kingdom, *The Lord mighty and strong, the Lord strong in battle.*† And he imparts fortitude to every one of His faithful followers who bear in mind the great courage wherewith he endured the torments of His most bitter Passion.

* Neque enim sibi carius in hâc vitâ munus concedi potuisse, dicebat quam pro illius nomine qui tantos in cruce pro generis humani salute cruciatus pertulisset, vitam insigni cruciatu profundere.

† Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portæ æternales, et introibit rex gloriæ. Quis est iste rex gloriæ? Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in prælio. Psal. xxiij. 7.

115. The fifth means is an ardent love of God. This it was which rendered the Apostle so dauntless and firm amid his sufferings; which taught him to despise tribulations, distress, famine, nakedness, persecution, perils, the sword; which helped him to overcome, as he himself bears witness, the most frightful evils that can befall mortal man.* For, as St. Augustine aptly observes, there is nothing so hard, so indomitable, so intractable, as not to be melted by the flames of love. The soul borne aloft on the stainless wings of divine love, unscathed by the most barbarous torments, rises admirably to God and to His sweet embrace. It must needs be so, if we are unwilling to admit that God allows the lovers of gold, of worldly glory, of women, to show more fortitude in suffering than they whose hearts are fixed on love of Him; though of a truth the impulse which urges on the former is, properly speaking, not real love, but what may truly be called vile passion.† The holy Doctor is moved to make this remark, because we daily see the hardships with which foolish lovers will put up for the sake of a beautiful face; what risks to life and limb soldiers are ready to run when drawn on by the prospects of a fleeting glory; the dangers by sea and land which merchants are willing to brave in their anxiety to acquire wealth. Now, if the attachment to these frail and transient goods, which in itself is a passion that argues want of strength, can inspire the human heart with such fortitude, how much more will not this be effected by the love of God, which is a true love, a pure love, a love for an object of infinite value; and hence mighty to steel our hearts against all evils, however formidable they may be.

116. On this account, does St. Leo the Great, in his discourse on the martyrdom of St. Laurence, ascribe to the love of God

* Quis nos separabit a caritate Christi? tribulatio? an angustia? an fames? an nuditas? an periculum? an persecutio? an gladius? . . . Sed in his omnibus superamus propter eum qui dilexit nos.—Ad Rom. viij. 35, 37.

† Nihil est tam durum atque ferreum quod non amoris igni vincatur, quo cum se anima rapit in Deum, super omnem carnificinam libera, et admiranda volabit pennis pulcherrimis, et integerrimis, quibus ad Dei complexum amor castus innititur, nisi vero amatores auri, amatores laudis, amatores fœminatum amatoribus suis Deus sinat esse fortiores; cum ille non amor, sed congruentius cupiditas, vel libido nominetur. Lib. de Morib. Eccles., cap. 22.

which was enkindled within him the fortitude wherewith the martyr lay on a red-hot gridiron as if it had been a bed of roses, mocked his executioners, and defied the tyrant; and so far from striking terror into the beholders by the atrocity of his sufferings, encouraged them by his constancy to undergo martyrdom themselves.*

117. Should the reader be curious to learn how it is that fervent charity inspires the loving soul with so great fortitude in suffering, we may briefly account for it as follows:—The fear of evil springs from self-love; it is because we are intensely fond of ourselves that we greatly dread whatever may harm us. If, then, the ardent love of God predominate over love of self, and keep it in check, the fear which we have of evil coming upon us is diminished, and we become strengthened to endure hardship and dangers. A great love, therefore, is necessary for all who wish to attain the virtue of fortitude.

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICAL HINTS TO DIRECTORS ON THE PRESENT MATTER.

118. First suggestion. The Director must be on his guard against mistakes, lest otherwise he account as pure gold that which is only base metal; I mean, lest he esteem every instance of fearlessness under evil to be an effect of the virtue of fortitude; for, as Pope St. Gregory observes, there is one fortitude which is a vice, and another fortitude which is a virtue,—the latter belongs to the just, the former to the reprobate. The same Saint goes on to say that the fortitude of the just consists in their chastising their own bodies, denying themselves the pleasures to which they

* Quam gloriosâ polleret dignitate, etiam persecutores ejus sentire potuerant, cum admirabilis illa animi fortitudo de Christi principaliter amore concreta, non solum ipsis non cederet, sed etiam alios exemplo suæ tolerantiæ roboraret. Serm. de S. Laurentio.

are inclined, renouncing the comforts of the present life, seeking after hardships in this world for the sake of eternal rewards, despising the allurements of earthly prosperity, overcoming the fear of adversity whenever it presents itself to assail our hearts. But the fortitude of the reprobate is to love unceasingly the fleeting goods of this life, to grow hardened and stubborn under the strokes of God's justice, to cling to their attachments to temporal things in spite of adversity and disaster, to strive after fame even with risk to health and life, to make war against the virtuous conduct of the just, not only by evil words and the wickedness of their own conversation, but at times even by open violence; to put all their trust in themselves, and every day, with a hateful perseverance, to continue their headlong career in a course of crime.*

119. To be brief, the holy Doctor aptly concludes by saying, that though worldlings subject themselves to hardships, yet because these are either not good in themselves, or are not undergone for a virtuous purpose, the fortitude of such persons is sinful, and serves no end but to lead them to perdition. The Director should, therefore, examine for what end his penitent puts up with hardships, so as to find out whether the fortitude displayed be good or evil. If the penitent, without flinching, undertakes arduous and painful things, either out of love of God or for the sake of virtue, or through a desire of eternal glory, his fortitude is virtuous and holy. But, if he subject himself to hardship for earthly ends, or under the impulse of some inordinate passion, his fortitude must be reckoned as a vice.

120. In this latter case the Director will strive to engage those

* Alia justorum, alia est fortitudo reproborum. Justorum quippe fortitudo est carnem vincere, propriis voluptatibus contraire; delectationem vitæ præsentis extinguere; hujus mundi aspera, pro æternis præmiis amare; prosperitatis blandimenta contemnere; adversitatis metum in corde superare. Reproborum vero fortitudo est, transitoria sine cessatione diligere, contra flagella conditoris insensibiliter perdurare, ab amore rerum temporalium nec adversitate quiescere; ad inanem gloriam etiam cum vitæ detrimento pervenire, malitiæ augmenta acquirere, bonorum vitam non solum verbis ac moribus, sed etiam gladiis impugnare; in semetipsis spem ponere, iniquitatem quotidie sine ullo desiderii defectu perpetrare. Moral., lib. vij., cap. 8.

who waste their natural fortitude on vile and worthless objects, to turn it to things supernatural and divine. If from God's seconding his endeavours he should succeed in this object, he will soon change them from the sinners they are now, into men who are really saints. For instance, we may find one who, for the sake of worldly fame, is constant and firm in endurance; one who, for love of glory, shrinks not from risking even his life: let us endeavour to turn this strong passion in the direction of God's glory, and we shall soon change such a penitent into a man of eminent virtue. Thus St. Ignatius Loyola, in his eagerness for military distinction, exposed his life to all manner of perils with a view to obtain the reputation of a valiant soldier. But after having turned his generous passion to God, what daring and vast enterprises did he not achieve for the greater glory of God! Should a Confessor meet with one who is enslaved by the love of women, to indulge which he fears not to undertake great labours, his object must be to make God the centre of this penitent's strong affection, and he will before long have a man of eminent sanctity. Thus Raymond Lully, who at one time seemed beside himself through his love for women, turned himself to the wiser folly of divine love, and performed wonders in the service of his well-beloved Lord. If the Director meet with any who are absorbed in amassing wealth and possessions and who, for filthy lucre's sake, spend their days amid numberless privations, let him endeavour to change the object of this sordid passion and substitute the acquiring of the means of relieving the poor and enhancing the splendour of divine worship, and he will soon change them into men of extraordinary piety. So, too, another who with incessant study exhausts his brains over his books, in the hope of temporal advancement, if he can be induced to apply this intense industry to the profit of his neighbour and to the cause of Holy Church, will sanctify his learned toils. And one who wastes his days in long and anxious waiting in the antechambers of the great, hoping for the chance of winning their favour, may by spending as much time in Church to obtain the blessing of the Most High, sanctify his unwearying assiduity of purpose. By these means, fortitude, which was but a vice, will gain the lustre of

virtue and, becoming meritorious instead of abominable, will be most pleasing in the eyes of our Almighty Creator.

121. Second suggestion. We have said that boldness in attacking whatever is the cause of great evils, in order to ward them off, is a part of the virtue of fortitude, but only when it is under the guidance of this virtue; for, in the contrary supposition, it degenerates into rashness, as the Angelic Doctor teaches.* We read in the second Book of Machabees, that Joseph and Azarias, hearing of the glorious victory won by Judas, Jonathan and Simon, inflamed with a desire of the like glory went forth to encounter the foe, but were routed with an immense slaughter of their troops; because, as the inspired text tells us, when they formed the design of making a bold attack upon the enemy, they were not careful to allow their boldness to be regulated by the advice of Judas and their brethren.† And, moreover, *these men came not of the seed of those by whose hand deliverance was given to Israel;*‡ their bravery was rash and imperfect, and they knew not how to bring their military daring under the dictates of prudence. The like is related in the same book of certain Priests, who, desiring to share their valour, were slain in battle; and the reason was, that they went to fight without taking advice.§

122. The Director will meet with venturesome persons who, like those whom we have just instanced, seem endowed with great fortitude, because they are eager for arduous enterprises; yet they neglect the dictates of prudence and moderation. He will fall in with women who, having read that certain female saints have founded convents and subjected them to austere and rigid rules, will fancy that they have a will to do the like. He will find men who, reading the accounts of the heroic deeds of those illustrious servants of God who went forth to carry the

* Fortitudo moderatur audaciam qua aggreditur terribilia sub spe alicujus, boni. 2, 2, quæst. 141, art. 3.

† Facta est plaga magna in populo, quia non audierunt Judam et fratres ejus, existimantes fortiter se facturos.

‡ Ipsi autem non erant de semine virorum illorum, per quos salus facta est in Israel. I. Mach. v. 61, 62.

§ In illa die ceciderunt sacerdotes in bello, dum volunt fortiter facere, dum sine consilio exeunt in prælium. I. Mach. v. 67.

Gospel to barbarous races and some of whom watered the heavenly seed with their blood, would be glad to do likewise; or again, he will meet with some that, having perused the description of the solitary life led by Anchorets in woods and caverns, who fed themselves on wild roots alone, are eager to imitate them. But they have neither aptitude nor spirit for such great undertakings; and even had they the spirit they are wholly without the means. To such the Director may reply, that they *are not of the seed of those men;* that their stature is not equal to that of those saintly heroes; that whatever fortitude God has gifted them with should be employed in overcoming themselves, in mortifying their passions, in withstanding the temptations of their infernal foe, and in smoothing down the obstacles to perfection they meet with in the state to which God has called them; that, by so doing, they will have enough to think of, without dreaming of undertakings which are far beyond their powers.

123. Third suggestion. The Director will bear in mind that women stand in peculiar need of the virtue of fortitude, both because they are naturally of a timid, frail and pusillanimous disposition, and because they are soon stranded on the voyage to perfection, when they are not upheld by this robust virtue. He will meet many women who enter fervently on a devout life, but he will find few who make any considerable progress therein. The slightest persecution, some trifling human respect, suffices to make their courage ooze out and their ardour cool. It will therefore be the part of the Director to establish them in this virtue by the means indicated in the foregoing Chapter—and especially after having grounded them in a holy fear, to set them on the path of love and confidence in God. I am aware that I have remarked above how very subject women are to fear; but they are also greatly under the influence of love, hence, if this latter strike root in their heart, it will moderate the other abject and cowardly passion, and render them steadfast in God's service. He may further observe, that those women whom God has chosen for great and arduous works, as St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa, and others of that class, were first inflamed with an extraordinary love for God by means of a multitude of heavenly favours vouchsafed to them from

above; and were fitted by this love for their arduous undertaking. He will therefore pursue the like course with them in order to strengthen them against timidity, faintheartedness and pusillanimity; so that they may not stop short in the path of perfection, but ever make greater progress therein.

ARTICLE IV.

The Fourth Cardinal Virtue, which is Temperance.

CHAPTER I.

DEFINITION OF TEMPERANCE SO FAR FORTH AS IT IS A CARDINAL VIRTUE.

124. THE Angelic Doctor treats of Temperance, as we have heretofore treated of Fortitude; and as we said concerning fortitude, that it may be taken in a wide and in a more restricted sense, so too does St. Thomas make the like remark with respect to Temperance. By temperance may be meant a certain moderation which reason enjoins upon our passions and upon all our actions —and in this sense it is a general virtue, which has a share in the practice of every virtue; for without this rational moderateness, no virtue can subsist. And it is of temperance in this wide sense that St. Augustine speaks when he says that it belongs to temperance to keep ourselves unspotted in God's sight. As is obvious, the holy Doctor here includes all the virtues under the name of temperance, since they are all needed for the maintenance of spotless purity. We may also, by the name of temperance, mean a certain particular moderation in the use of things that most excite our sensuality, and have a great power to seduce reason by their

* Ad temperantiam pertinet, Deo se integrum, incorruptumque servare.

sensible attractions, and to make it deviate from the right path. In this latter sense, it is a special virtue, which ranks in the fourth place among the Cardinal Virtues.* It is to temperance in this sense that we intend to devote the present article.

125. But to go to the very foundations of our present subject-matter, it must be known that the sensual appetite in man (which is also called concupiscence) has for the sole object of its interior acts and motions, sensible good and sensible evil; that through its excessive shrinking from pain, and its eager desire of pleasure, it has great power to make reason swerve from the right course. Hence reason stands in need of two virtues to enable it to keep in check this unruly steed, which is over-apt to be immoderately frightened at sensible pain, and to pursue after pleasure with too much eagerness. Fortitude is a virtue by which reason keeps down fear, prevents the terror-stricken will from going astray, and steadies it in a virtuous course; as we have hitherto been explaining. The second of these two virtues is temperance, which holds in check our fiery animal nature, in order that the will may not yield to the allurements of sensual pleasure, nor be immoderately attracted to it.

126. We may further repeat that, among sensible pleasures, some are more vehement and intense than others. The most intense are those which regard the sense of touch by means of food and drink and other sensual gratifications, since these spring more directly from man's animal nature; the former as serving to the perpetuation of the individual, the latter of the race. The pleasures which affect the senses of sight, hearing, and smell, are much less intense, for they are less necessary to the preservation of the individual and of the species. Whence it follows, that to temperance, inasmuch as it is a cardinal virtue, it belongs in the first place to moderate the more intense gratifications of con-

* Nomen intemperantiæ, dupliciter accipi potest. Uno modo secundum communitatem suæ significationis, et sic temperantia non est virtus specialis, sed generalis, quia nomen temperantiæ significat quamdam temperiem, scilicet moderationem, quam ratio ponit in humanis operationibus, et passionibus. . . . Si vero consideretur antonomastice temperantia, secundum quod refrænet appetitum ab his, quæ maxime alliciunt hominem, sic est specialis virtus, utpote habens specialem materiam. 2, 2, quæst. 142, art. 2.

cupiscence, and secondly, to keep in check those which have less intensity. We must also bear in mind that among sensible pleasures those are vicious, and hence subject to the control of temperance, which are inordinate, that is, not conformable with the dictates of reason; for, if conformable to this, they are rather to be esteemed virtuous, because they help reason to an easier and more expeditious attainment of its praiseworthy ends.

127. This being so, temperance, as a cardinal virtue, may be defined a habit which inclines us to moderate our concupiscence, mainly in regard of those pleasures of the sense of touch, which are connected with food and drink and the animal appetites; and secondarily, with respect to the gratification of the other senses. This is wholly borrowed from St. Thomas,* who on this point takes the same view as St. Augustine. This Saint defines temperance to be an affection which restrains and withholds the sensitive appetite from the objects of its brutish cravings:† such as are the gratifications resulting from excess in eating or drinking, and from every unchaste and unlawful indulgence.

128. St. Bernard was eminent for this virtue, and for his care in denying himself the slightest approach to unchaste pleasure; for when tempted by abandoned women, both in public resorts and in his own home, he always repelled them with heroic constancy. He was eminent also in caution regarding the gratification of the palate; for by his rigorous abstinence he attained not only the power of keeping it in check, but of being quite insensible to it; as appeared when, without noticing what he was doing, he drank a cup full of oil, not distinguishing it from an ordinary and common beverage. But let us hearken to what he himself has left on record concerning his own temperance, for we can have no more reliable and authoritative witness:—"I abstain from wine," he writes, "because we learn from the Apostle that in wine lust lies concealed; or if I am ailing, I take some little, according to the advice of the same Apostle. I abstain from eating meat, lest while giving too much nutriment to the flesh, it should also nourish the hateful vices

* 2, 2, quæst. 142, art. 3-5.

† Temperantia est affectio coercens, et cohibens appetitum ab his, quæ turpiter appetuntur. Lib. de Morib. Eccl., cap. 19.

of the flesh. I endeavour to eat sparingly of bread, lest the stomach being overcharged, I may find it painful to remain in prayer and soon weary of it, and lest the prophet reproach me for having eaten so much food as to be unable to take any more. Lastly, I am on my guard against drinking even water in great quantity, lest the fulness of the belly should prove an incentive to lust."* We may perceive by this, how heroic was the temperance of this great Saint, who, not content with keeping in check the gratification which naturally follows on meat and drink, made use of coarse food, and of an insipid kind of drink, in order to thwart and positively mortify his taste, and thus he attained to the extinction of that far more abominable pleasure which is mortal poison to the soul.

129. There is a remarkable example of temperance related in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert, which certain holy monks gave to another ancient monk.† They had come to visit him in his cell, with a view to be consoled by him in the spirit. Their good host received them with great hospitality and cheerfulness, and at once prepared for their bodily refreshment a dish of lentils. The holy guests, before sitting down to their meal, said one to another, "Let us pray, and give the spirit its refreshment before taking that of the body;" and forthwith they began to chaunt the psalms of David. They continued their praises of God until they had completed the Psalter. They next began to read the Prophets, and being wholly absorbed in these sacred lessons and their devout psalmody, they thus spent the whole day and night, without giving a thought to the food which awaited them. When the morning began to dawn, they became aware for the first time that the night was passed; yet not even then did they think of giving rest to their weary limbs, but continued their

* Abstineo a vino, quia in vino luxuria est, aut si infirmus sum, modico utor, juxta consilium Pauli. Abstineo a carnalibus, ne dum nimium nutriunt carnem, simul et carnis nutriant vitia. Panem ipsum cum mensurâ studeo sumere, ne onerato ventre stare ad orandum tædeat, et ne improperet mihi Propheta, quia *panem meum comederim cum saturitate.* Sed nec simplici aquâ ingurgitare me assuescam, ne distentio sani ventris usque ad titillationem pertineat libidinis. In Cant., cap. 66.

† Cap. 3, sec. 5.

pious exercises until the hour of None, when, as it was time for them to return to their own cells, they went away without breaking bread. Great, indeed, was this temperance, for it rendered these servants of God not merely moderate in eating, but wholly regardless of food and drink, and rendered them insensible, even after so long a fast, to the gnawings of hunger.

130. Before closing this Chapter, we must warn the reader that we have purposely ranked temperance as the fourth of the cardinal virtues, and our view is grounded on the reasons alleged by St. Thomas, who teaches that the theological virtues and prudence are to take precedence of all others—the former as being the most illustrious, the latter as regulating the rest. He further says, that justice and fortitude are more excellent than temperance, and gives as his reason that the most estimable of all the virtues are those which regard the good of the greater number. Such is justice, which establishes equality among the things that belong to others. Such, too, is fortitude, which, though it tends of its own nature to ward off evils that menace us personally, when this is expedient, yet enables us to bear with and to keep off evils coming from the attacks of others, as is the case in just wars. But this does not hold good of temperance, the sole object of which is the regulation of our own appetites; and therefore it holds the last place.*

CHAPTER II.

THE BEAUTY OF TEMPERANCE CONTRASTED WITH THE DEGRADATION OF THE CONTRARY VICES.

131. Any beauteous object whatsoever stands in bolder relief when contrasted with its opposite. Thus white put into juxtaposition with black gains greater brilliancy; the heat which

* Unde manifestum est, quod justitia et fortitudo sunt excellentiores virtutes quam temperantia, quibus prudentia, et virtutes theologicæ sunt potiores. 2, 2, quæst. 141, art. 8.

follows on cold seems more intense; the cold which succeeds heat is felt more severely; the light which dawns amid darkness possesses greater splendour; the darkness which follows directly after light is blacker than any other. If, then, we would place the lustre of a virtue in bolder relief, it suffices to contrast it with its opposite vice. And this is the more true in the present instance, as want of moderation in eating and drinking, and incontinency in unchaste delights, which are diametrically opposed to the virtue of temperance, are of all vices the most sordid, the most shameful, the vilest, and the most abominable; and thus serve by their very filthiness to enhance the charms of this noble virtue.

132. And in fact St. Thomas, treating of intemperance, says that this vice is the most disgraceful and the most to be abhorred by man,* for two reasons. First, because the intemperate man, caring nothing about the likeness of God, Whose image he bears, prefers, as the Prophet says, to degrade himself to the level of the brute.† For in what else do brutes occupy themselves but in gratifying their appetites by feeding, and in yielding to their lust as often as it is enkindled within them. Now, what they do under the compulsion of natural instinct, the incontinent man does of his own free choice; so that the Psalmist could justly say, that *he is become*, not "born," *like unto them:* for this is the lowest degradation for a man to forget himself through lust and gluttony, and though not born a beast, to choose to become one in defiance of his rational nature.

133. The second reason is, that, in the vice of incontinence, we lose all trace of that eminent gift which distinguishes man from the brute, I mean reason. It may be observed that the brute is incapable of the vices distinct from intemperance; for although these vices may be at variance with the dictates of right reason, yet are they not wholly destitute of some faint glimmer of reason. Beasts are not liable to pride, which is but an ill-

* Est ergo intemperantia maxime exprobabilis propter duo, etc. Summa, 2, 2, quæst. 14, art. 4.

† Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit: comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis. Psal. xlviij. 13.

regulated desire of excelling; for being wholly ignorant of all excellence whatever, they can have no desire of it. They are incapable of covetousness, which is the inordinate hankering after wealth; for having no notion of property in temporal goods, they can neither desire nor strive after it. Nor are they capable of anger, in its strict sense, as the tendency of this passion is to revenge the wrongs we have received and to seek satisfaction for them; while animals have no consciousness of personal rights, and are unable to rise to the notion of wrong, and hence to seek compensation. Beasts are also incapable of envy, which is the grief excited by another's prosperity viewed as an obstacle to our own; for, as they know nothing of the good of others, they cannot possibly feel sorry on account of it. Still less are they liable to spiritual sloth, as spiritual good is wholly unknown to them. They are capable alone of gluttony and lust, into which they blindly plunge, and wherein their enjoyment solely consists. Hence it is true to say, that the man who is given to these two vices puts off his rational nature, and clothes himself in that of the brute. As St. Peter Chrysologus says—"Such a one ceases to be man, and changes himself into a beast."*

134. Nay, he is degraded even below the level of the brute; for the brute is not an object of loathing before God, while the incontinent man is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. St. Antoninus, in his *Summa*, relates,† that an Angel, under the form of a handsome youth, was on a journey with a holy Hermit, when they came upon a decaying corpse, which the worms were devouring, and which spread around an abominable stench. The Hermit, unable to bear with the insufferable smell, at once with both hands closed his mouth and nostrils; but the Angel went forward without giving the least sign of disgust. Further on, they saw coming from afar a Cavalier richly clad, with his clothes adorned with flowers and lace, mounted on a full-blooded steed, which was caparisoned with a cloth embroidered with gold. As soon as he was in sight, the Angel, turning his face aside, put his hand to his nose. The Hermit, wondering at this, said, "But,

* A se migrat, et ab homine totus transit in bestiam.

† Part IV., tit. 14, cap. 6, sec. 1.

holy Angel, you passed just now, without any concern, by that rotting corpse, and now you show that you feel very much affected by the appearance of this gay youth, all scented and perfumed." "Ah, Son!" said the Angel, "I smell the filth of the incontinency wherein this young man, whose exterior is so attractive, is wholly steeped. Know that he is more offensive in the sight of God and of His holy Angels than the most putrid carrion that lies in any common burial-place could be to you."

135. But if want of moderation in bodily pleasures makes man like to the brutes, and even more loathsome than they, temperance, on the contrary, raises man above himself, and makes him superior to his own nature, by putting him on a par with the Angels of heaven. Angels take no pleasure in meat and drink, they are incapable of it. The temperate man is capable of such pleasure, and either rejects it altogether, or partakes of it with perfect detachment, and no further than is necessary. An Angel feels no sensual gratification, because his nature is incapable of it. The temperate man is capable of the feeling, but nevertheless does not experience it, or if he does become aware of any motion of it, he tramples the sensation under foot with virtuous indignation, and forces it to be still. And in truth, while the intemperate make themselves beasts by their inordinate cleaving to sensual delights, the temperate render themselves, by their moderation, like unto the Angels.

136. But there is yet a lower deep; for not only does intemperance brutalize a man by keeping him plunged in those gratifications which are proper to the brutes—as was before observed—but what is far worse, it unfits him for those functions which especially belong to man. Tell me, I pray you, what is a man good for, if he is given to debauchery and lust? Is he fit for business, trade, or any affairs of importance? But what forethought, what prudence, ability, what resource can be expected from a brain clouded by the fumes of meat and wine, and darkened by the love of sensual pleasures? Or do you think he will be fit for study, speculation, and the acquirement of knowledge? But what power of thought, what penetration and comprehension of truth can be found in a man whose intellect is

buried beneath a mass of food? How can any one give his thoughts to a serious subject when they are continually drawn to the objects of his vile pleasures? Or will it be said that he may be fit for prayer, and the contemplation of divine and heavenly things? But what greater hindrance to the admission of the light from on high can be imagined, than that which arises from sensual indulgence, which shuts out not only the heavenly light of grace, but darkens the natural light of reason itself?

137. Moses came down from Sinai, bearing in his hands the tables of the law. On nearing the foot of the mountain, he beheld the people wholly plunged in excess. At this sight, inflamed with a holy indignation, he dashed into pieces those sacred tablets, on which God had graven His commandments, believing, as St. Basil says, that it was an altogether irreverent act to publish God's law to a people drunk with wine.* How, then, shall he be fit to meditate on God's Word, and to receive the light needed for the understanding of heavenly things, who, like this wanton people, is given to eating and drinking and who gives himself up, without cessation, to be the sport of every unlawful craving?

138. It will be no small thing for so wretched a man if he stops short of losing every idea of God, and every vestige of faith; for to this it is that drunkenness and lechery lead their followers, by ever increasing the darkness of their minds and the hardness of their hearts. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* These are the words of the Psalmist, who proceeds at once to account for this extravagance of folly and wickedness: *Corrupt and abominable are they become in their pursuits.*‡ This was the case with most of the heresiarchs who, blinded by sensuality, turned their backs upon God and His truth, and fell headlong into an abyss of awful terror.

139. A notable illustration of this point may be found in a fact related by Martin Del Rio, in his work entitled "Magical Disquisi-

* Propheta sanctissimo indignum judicante vinolentum populum a Deo legem accipere. Homil. 1, De Jejunio: ante medium.

† Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus. Psal. xiij.

‡ Corrupti sunt, et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis.

tions," and which he gives as having happened recently, and as being notorious in his time in some parts of Flanders.* Three drunken and lecherous monks, each of whom kept a concubine, had spent a part of the day and night in revelling and debauchery, when one less wicked and hardened than his fellows, exclaimed, "The night is now far gone, we have done enough in the way of drink and lust; it is time to give thanks to God for His benefits to us." "I give thanks to the devil," replied one of the others; "they are due to him, as he is the master whom we are serving." Having said this, he burst into loud laughter, and rising from table lay down to sleep. The others took their rest in the same room. When they were in their heaviest sleep, they heard the door burst violently open, and they saw enter a demon of lofty stature, dark complexion, and ferocious mien, habited as a huntsman, followed by two cooks of lower stature. Hardly had these set foot in the room, when the chief began to turn his fierce and angry eyes from one bed to the other, and cried, with a frightful voice, "Where is he who thanked me? I am come to give him his reward." So saying, he dragged the monk out of bed, and handed him over to the two cooks to spit and to roast. The latter at once lighted a raging fire, and set about executing the cruel orders received. The infernal huntsman, then turning to the other two, who were quaking with fear at this horrid sight, said, "You, too, richly deserve the like punishment; nor is the will to inflict it wanting to me, but I am hindered by a higher power. I am constrained to depart, but I give you warning that the most tremendous chastisements are in store for you both." In beholding this dreadful tragedy, the two monks became more dead than alive. The next morning, at daybreak, their horror increased at finding that last night's occurrence was not a dream or a fancy, but a real chastisement sent by God; for on the floor they found their boon-companion dead, and scorched with fire. Del Rio concludes his story by saying:—"I know not whether in any past age so useful a warning has ever been given to the wicked. I know the Order to which these scoundrel monks belonged. I know the monastery where this tragic and

* Tom. ii., lib. 3, part. 1, quæst. 7.

never-to-be-forgotten event came to pass, but I shall withhold all names."* The reader may now judge whether I was right in saying that gluttony, drunkenness and incontinence, in the long-run, extinguish in men's minds not only the light of reason, but that of faith. This wretched monk had come to acknowledge the devil, not God, for his master, and to God's sworn enemy did he pay the tribute of thanksgiving and homage, and he received at his hands the fitting recompense. Yet we must needs believe that, having in his earlier days devoted himself to God's service in the cloister, he must at one time have had far other notions concerning God, and very different sentiments as to the truth of our holy faith. But it is the property of incontinence to dull, to extinguish, and wholly to efface all that is rational and sacred, in the heart of all who give it shelter.

140. Temperance, on the contrary, perfects reason, strengthens faith, renders us fully disposed for all our actions, both natural and supernatural; since it is a virtue which lightens the mind, illumines the understanding, cleanses the soul, purifies the heart, and so renders man able and ready for all those actions which befit his nature, both in the lower and merely natural sphere and in the higher order of divine grace. Above all, it puts us into a state very suitable for prayer, since nothing disposes us so much for the reception of the light of heaven and of motions coming from God, as to be pure and free from all those vile gratifications which temperance holds in abomination. Hence Jesus Christ had cause to say, *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*:† as far, that is, as it is possible in this mortal life. And the saints, who were well aware of this truth, had nothing so much at heart as to forego the pleasures which spring from savoury food and delicious drinks, and abominated nothing more than the defilements of bodily delights.

141. He who would see summed up in a few brief words all the praise of this virtue, and would take in with a single glance of his mind all its charms, should read what St. Prosper says about

* Haud scio, an ab aliquot sæculis quidquam ad exemplum utilius acciderit. Scio locum, et ordinem, sed utrumque silentio involvo.

† Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt. Matth v. 8.

it :—"Temperance makes a man moderate, frugal, chaste, silent, serious, and modest. When this virtue takes root within us, it bridles all lust, moderates our emotions, intensifies holy desires, mortifies all wishes that are unholy, sets in order whatever within us is in disorder and confusion, gives permanence to the good regulation of our affections, keeps out evil thoughts, implants such as are good, extinguishes the fire of lust in the will, stimulates the lukewarm soul with the hope of future reward, calms the mind, and defends our virtue from the storms of the vices, rendering it safe and secure."*

CHAPTER III.

IN WHAT CONSISTS THE MEASURE SET BY TEMPERANCE TO SENSUAL DELIGHTS.

142. In our second Section, and in the fifth Chapter of the third Article, speaking of the sense of taste, we said, that it is to be regulated by the spiritual man avoiding the five failings to which gluttony makes us inclined, and which, in the language of St. Thomas, are styled the daughters of this vice. As we are now discoursing of temperance, to which it especially belongs to regulate this treacherous sense, we may observe that it is not the office of this cardinal virtue to render us insensible to all gratification of the palate, since this would amount to the assertion that the fortitude of the martyrs consisted in their not feeling pain when subjected by tyrants to most excruciating tortures. This

* Temperantia temperantem facit, abstinentem, parcum, sobrium, moderatum, pudicum, tacitum, serium, verecundum. Hæc virtus, si in animo habitat, libidines frænat, affectus temperat, desideria sancta multiplicat, vitiosa castigat, omnia intra nos confusa ordinat, ordinata corroborat : cogitationes pravas removet, inserit sanctas : ignem libidinosæ voluptatis extinguit, animi teporem desiderio futuræ retributionis accendit, mentem placidâ tranquillitate componit, et virtutem semper ab omni vitiorum tempestate defendit. De Vitâ Contemp., lib. ii., cap. 19.

would be impossible, as the taste, equally with the touch, is independent of the control of the will, so that, when their objects are properly applied, these two senses must perforce give rise to their proper sensation, whether it be pleasurable or painful. The virtue of temperance consists in such a moderation of the sense of taste, as not to take food or drink in a larger quantity or in any other manner than that which necessity requires.

143. But here, with St. Thomas, we must distinguish a twofold necessity—one which regards the bare support of life, the other which is concerned about its proper maintenance.* In regard of the former, the dictate of temperance is, that we should supply our bodies with food on the same principle as we pour oil into a lamp, namely, that it may not be extinguished. But this is not enough; hence this virtue further requires that we allow the body as much nutriment as may preserve health, and not unduly diminish our strength or unfit us for the duties of our condition; for Aristotle writes, "The temperate man seeks after what is delectable for health's sake alone, or at most, in order to maintain the vigour which he possesses."† And this is termed necessity of fitness or convenience. So that it is no less foreign to this virtue to run the risk of serious ailment by excess, than by so indiscreet an abstinence as would render us delicate and sickly by undermining the constitution. Thus an artisan would sin against this virtue if, either by undue rigour in fasting or abstaining, or by excess of debauchery or drunkenness, he were to render himself unable to ply his trade. The same, too, holds good of a student or master who should thus unfit himself for study; and of a Religious who should incapacitate himself for prayer and the observance of his rule.

144. To this latter necessity St. Thomas refers the keeping

* Necessitas humanæ vitæ potest attendi dupliciter: uno modo, secundum quod dicitur necessarium illud, sine quo res nullo modo potest esse, sicut cibus necessarius animali. Alio modo, secundum quod dicitur necessarium illud, sine quo res non potest convenienter esse. Temperantia autem non solum attendit primam necessitatem, sed etiam secundam. 2, 2, quæst. 141, art. 6, ad 2.

† Ethic., lib. iij. cap. 11. Temperans appetit delectabilia propter sanitatem vel propter bonam habitudinem.

such a table as is suitable to our position in life, to our office, station and means.* Because meals which in the case of a wealthy citizen would be frugal, would be prodigal in that of a poor peasant; a course of dishes that would be mean for an emperor, would be too sumptuous for a private gentleman; since (as St. Augustine—whom the Angelic Doctor is quoting—has put it) the temperate man considers not only what is necessary for the support of life, but that which is suitable to the requirements of his station and employment.

145. The reader may hence object, that St. Peter of Alcantara, with many other illustrious servants of God, sinned against this virtue of temperance, since they neglected to recruit their strength with food; for some took it only every third or fourth day and, at times, even but once in the week. If this be so, all those devout Anchorets would have sinned who fed on nothing but a few wild roots or herbs, boiled in plain water, and that only once a day, when the sun was going down. Daniel too would have been guilty of sin, since he spent three whole weeks without tasting a drop of water or a crumb of bread and neglected all care of his body, as he himself informs us.† It is unquestionable that all these persons did not take food sufficient for the preservation of health and strength, nor such as suited their station or charge.

146. But the pious reader may forbear wearying himself by pressing the like objections, as St. Thomas has been beforehand with him, and has utterly overthrown all argument based upon them. He says, that to deprive ourselves of the gratifications necessary for preserving the individual and the species, in some, would be a sin against temperance, as while in others it would be an act of virtue.‡ He illustrates this from the conduct of the athletes, who denied themselves many pleasures that they might be fitted for their arduous enterprises. He adduces also the

* Temperantia respicit necessitatem, quantum ad convenientiam vitæ, quæ quidem attenditur, non solum secundum convenientiam corporis, sed etiam secundum convenientiam exercitiorum et rerum, puta divitiarum, officiorum, et multo magis secundum convenientiam honestatis. Art. Cit. ad Tertium.

† In diebus illis ego Daniel lugebam trium hebdomadarum diebus, panem desiderabilem non comedi, et caro et vinum non introierunt in os meum: sed neque unguento usus sum. Dan. x.

‡ 2, 2, quæst. 142, art. 1. in corp.

example of those penitents who weakened their bodies by rigorous abstinence, for the sake of the purification of their souls, and the attainment of greater perfection. He mentions, moreover, the contemplatives, who forego, as far as possible, every bodily enjoyment, however suitable to their position, so that they may be disposed to contemplation and knowledge of things divine. He maintains that all these people acted virtuously, as their abstinence, singular as it may have been, is in conformity with reason, whether unassisted by grace, or enlightened by faith;* for, granting that their constitution had received some detriment from the practice adopted, they bore with all for the sake of a good of a much higher order; as for example the purification of the soul, their personal perfection, and the gift of penetrating heavenly truths.† And speaking in particular of contemplation, he says: Persons who have given themselves up to a life of contemplation, and of passing on spiritual goods to others by a kind of spiritual paternity, do well in abstaining from many pleasures which other persons are right in embracing; those, namely, who feel themselves called to bodily activity and to carnal parentage. Should, then, the reader be invited by God to this extraordinary abstinence, and the call be approved of by his Director who stands in the place of the Almighty in his regard, he need have no scruple in undertaking a more rigorous course of life; because his conduct, on the one side, will not be a breach of temperance and, on the other side, it will be an act containing many other virtues.

147. But the main fruit of this virtue is that which we insisted upon in the passage of the second Section referred to above, namely, that in partaking of meat and drink, we should never seek for the gratification which accompanies the act, but propose to ourselves the support of life, health, and strength for God's service and for the fitting discharge of the duties of our state and calling;

* Quia sunt secundum rationem rectam.

† Homines, qui hoc officium assumpserunt, ut contemplationi vacent, et bonum spirituale, quasi quâdam spirituali propagatione in alios transmittant, a multis delectationibus laudabiliter abstinent, a quibus illi, quibus ex officio competit operibus corporalibus, et generationi carnali vacare, laudabiliter non abstinent. Eod. Art. Ad secund.

which are the lawful motives suggested by the above-quoted holy Doctor, who herein follows St. Augustine.* This is the rule to be kept by every temperate man, and which is laid down in both the Old and New Testaments, for the use of bodily enjoyments in the present life; and it may be thus briefly stated—that we are not to seek after anything merely for its own sake, or for the pleasure which it brings with it, but only inasmuch as it is a necessary of life and required by the duties that we have to discharge, without attachment to the thing, and with measure and moderation. If we fail to act thus, we shall surely offend against temperance.

148. To temperance also belongs, as we have already remarked, moderation and continence in sexual pleasures. But as this is a delicate matter, and one which does not admit of much development, I will state, briefly, that in every one who is not engaged in marriage, all wilful pleasure or delectation of this kind is a grievous sin, because, in this vice there is no parvity of matter, such as may be found in sins of other classes. No poison is so deadly to the body as is this gratification to the soul; for one drop of the same suffices to give death to the spirit and to bring it to eternal perdition. Hence there is nothing of which unmarried persons should be more wary, and against which they should keep stricter guard. As for married people, they can take the rule I have just now laid down with respect to the use of food, and they should take heed not to swerve from decency, whether as regards the substance, the manner, the season, the rectitude of the end, and the purity of their intention.

149. I omit any further mention of moderation in the pleasures affecting the sight, hearing and smell, which is the secondary object of temperance, because I have treated this matter at full length in the second Section of this work. I will merely caution the reader to be careful not to listen to, or to gaze on, what is vicious, dangerous, or in any way tending to hinder moral good;

* Habet vir temperans in rebus hujus vitæ regulam utroque Testamento firmatam, ut eorum nihil diligat, nihil per se appetendum putet, sed ad vitæ hujus, atque officiorum necessitatem, quantum satis est usurpet, utentis modestiâ, non amantis affectu. De Morib. Eccl., cap. 21.

not to seek after the sensible and material enjoyment which may arise from the use of these senses, but ever to direct them to some right end.

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE PRESENT ARTICLE.

150. FIRST suggestion. The Director will observe that in the foregoing Chapter I have spoken of the mistake which some persons commit by eating too much or too little; not that I hold both extremes to be equally dangerous, but because both are contrary to temperance, and are defects. For the rest, every one should be on his guard chiefly against the extreme of taking too much; this is what he must stand in fear of, defending himself against it by the weapons of mortification. With reference to the opposite extreme his own self-love will suffice for his protection. It was thus the saints acted, who, for fear of exceeding in a matter where the taste allures, deludes and hoodwinks us, were ever inclined to the side of abstinence. St. Jerome relates, that when St. Paula, after a grievous malady, was ordered a little wine by her physicians, she could never be induced to grant her body this trifling indulgence;* nor would she yield to the advice of Eusebius, the Bishop of Jerusalem, but urged such strong reasons for her abhorrence of wine, that she nearly persuaded this Prelate, eighty years old as he was, to renounce its use in his extreme old age. This we also learn from St. Jerome. It is to be owned that the holy Doctor did not approve this stubborn constancy of hers in not yielding to the counsels of others; yet her conduct serves to prove that the saints, when it was a question of gratifying the palate, chose rather to exceed by taking too little than by taking too much. We read the like in the life of the noble Hedwige, who being not only warned, but rebuked, by a Bishop, her brother, for her too rigid frugality in the use of food—amounting as it

* In Epitaph Paulæ: ad Eustoch.

did to a perpetual fast—and for her entire abstinence from flesh-meat and every dainty, could not be made to swerve from her pious custom, and replied, that the little she took was sufficient for her nourishment.* Hence, whoever would follow the saints in their temperance and moderation in the use of food, must always guard against taking too much, and incline rather to the opposite extreme. But in everything we must proceed with due discretion, which is the salt and seasoning of all the virtues.

151. Second suggestion. As regards impure pleasures, which it is the business of temperance to hold in check, I have nothing to say to the Director, in this place at least, as my theme is perfection, which is far from concerning itself with souls that have gone astray in the paths of vice. Yet if it ever happen that some penitent after having long exercised himself in the spiritual life under the guidance of his Director, and after having been enabled to make some progress in virtue by the care taken of him by the same, should fall into frailty (a not impossible case, especially in punishment of vanity) and, overwhelmed with shame, should confess his transgression, let the Confessor, for God's sake, take care not to receive the avowal with signs of astonishment, or to break out into words of rebuke, or into sharp and angry reprehension; for this would be to *bruise a broken reed*,† in other words, to dishearten the penitent, and to cast him headlong into the abyss of despair; it would deprive him of all confidence, so that he would scarce venture for the future to appear in the holy tribunal. In such cases, the Director should arouse within himself sentiments of tender compassion for his penitent, remembering that he too is liable to the like falls, and that fall he surely would, were God to withdraw the support of his hand. Speaking therefore in a gentle tone, he will take by the hand the penitent who is disgraced in his own eyes by his sin, and lead him on to the unfathomable shoreless ocean of the divine mercy, there pointing out to him God all ready to restore him to favour, and to admit him once more to his former familiar standing. He should tell him that he has been allowed to fall thus for his own greater profit, in

* Surius, In Vitâ S. Hedvig., cap. 4, Die 1 Oct.

† Arundinem quassatam confringere.

order that, humbling himself and mistrusting his strength, he may put all his trust in God. He must seek to remove him from every occasion of sin and furnish him with means which may secure him against a relapse. The penitent will then go away full of compunction, and will be at the same time encouraged to serve God; and he will arise from his fall with fresh vigour, to go forward in the path of perfection.

152. We read in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,* that an aged monk, having received a visit from one of his female relations, fell into a grievous sin; and, what is worse, despairing of pardon, began to think of forsaking God's service, and of returning to the world. God permitted that during the night another solitary should overhear the devils conversing together, and boasting that they had at length made such and such a monk fall into fornication, and that the poor wretch had at last been caught in their trap. On hearing this, the servant of God was greatly troubled, and betook himself at once to the cell of the monk who had thus fallen. He found him plunged in a sea of sadness and despair. On being questioned, he at once avowed his fault, adding, that he wanted now to return to the world, and to give rein to his passions. "Do not do that, brother," replied the servant of God kindly and very gently. "Cast out the guilty woman, and remain in this holy place, where for so many years you have served God. Be of good cheer; this has been a device and snare of your hellish foe. Fear not; God stands with outstretched arms to receive you. Keep up your hope, put all your trust in His great goodness." With such loving and comforting words, the religious encouraged and reanimated the confidence of the fallen monk, so that having recovered hope, he began to bewail his sin most bitterly, and continued to live in that desert with greater fervour than he had hitherto done. But had the servant of God begun to upbraid the poor old man, and to throw in his teeth his religious profession, his failing years, and the other aggravating features of his sin, he would surely have pushed him over the brink of the precipice. Who could have withheld him from returning to the world, and from plunging into vice as he had

* De Forn, n. 9.

already planned in his mind? While on the contrary, by charity and gentleness, he was restored to the service of God.

153. Third suggestion. With respect to the lawful gratification which results from the other senses,—from smell, sight, hearing, taste, and the partaking of food,—temperance demands that these also be used with moderation, as was fully explained in the preceding Chapters. Hence it behoves the Director to prescribe to his penitents rules which may insure, on their part, a becoming and discreet moderation. These rules are twofold; of which, the first is to debar these senses from what gratifies them; the second is to deprive them, not indeed of what is pleasing, but of the pleasure which arises from the application of the mind to such pleasurable objects. I will illustrate the former rule by divers instances in the lives of the saints. St. Aloysius, when compelled to be present at a theatrical exhibition or a tourney, kept his eyes cast down, and deprived them of the gay spectacle. St. Laurence Justinian practised the same mortification, as he would never go into the garden attached to his house, to refresh his eyes with a sight of the pleasant verdure. Abbot Machetes, whom I have heretofore mentioned, habitually fell asleep when any unprofitable conversation was started among the monks, and so by slumber closed his ears to such discourse. St. Teresa, experiencing in one of her illnesses a great want of appetite, was on a certain occasion presented with a very dainty dish, exquisitely prepared, but as soon as she had merely tasted it, she sent it away. Being questioned by the infirmarian why she did not partake of so great a delicacy, she replied, "I do not eat of it because it *is* a delicacy;" giving the Sister thereby to understand that her intention was to deny her palate that gratification.

154. The former of these two methods is that most followed by the saints, and is certainly the safer of the two; for when the senses are deprived of all agreeable objects, the soul fasts from all sensible pleasure, and is, in consequence, free from all attachment to it. And though we should frequently exercise ourselves in this method (as the Director will have observed in the divers Articles of my second Section), yet it is not always practicable, for we cannot always keep our eyes and ears closed, nor is it possible to observe a

constant fast. It is indeed necessary to recruit the body with food, in order to support life and health and to maintain our strength and efficiency for the due discharge of our duties and functions; and we must needs look at others, converse and treat with them, whenever business requires it. Further, it behoves us now and then to relieve our minds when wearied with prayer or study or by the rigours of religious observance, by some agreeable conversation or pleasant sight; nor should the Director be so rigorous as to strive to keep the feelings of his penitents on the rack of an unceasing mortification. He should therefore tell them to adopt the second method in such cases; in other words, he should instruct them that, while allowing their senses such indulgence as may be proper, they should keep their souls raised above the sensible and material gratification that springs from such indulgence.

155. We read, in the Life of St. Bernard, that he journeyed for a whole day along the shores of a most beautiful lake, without being conscious that he was in the neighbourhood of very remarkable scenery. On another occasion, when paying a visit to an Abbot, with whom he was intimate, he was mounted on a mule superbly caparisoned. He got into the saddle, and reached his journey's end, without being aware of the costly trappings of the animal which he rode. The Abbot was astonished at seeing a man of such austerity and holiness coming to him with all this pomp and, unable to conceal his wonder, gave a gentle and kindly rebuke. St. Bernard begged of him, in reply, to have some compassion, as he had not been so much as aware of the empty parade. Thus should we, when compelled to use our senses on pleasurable objects, pass by, with the like abstraction, the gratification arising from them, so that the pleasure remaining in the outer senses may not entangle the heart in any imperfect or injurious attachment. This is precisely the teaching of the Apostle: *Let them that have wives live as though they had none, they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not using it."** Whereby the Apostle would have us know that we

* Qui habent uxores, tamquam non habentes sint; et qui flent, tamquam

should use, possess, and enjoy the good things of this world with such an abstraction of mind and superiority of soul, that the pleasurable sensation may remain without, nor so penetrate and attach the will as to enslave it; so that, while for just reasons it allows the senses their gratification, it may ever hold fast its own liberty. This is to enjoy the good things we use as though we enjoyed them not. A sober man drinks, and a drunkard likewise drinks; but with this difference, that the latter takes his liquor mouthful by mouthful, and gives himself full leisure to relish it, and not only steeps himself in it, but plunges headlong into it with all the power of his will; the sober man, on the contrary, without loss of time, empties his glass quickly and at once, because he keeps his soul estranged from the satisfaction of drinking, and allows it to the body only as a necessary refreshment. The same applies to the pleasure allowed to the other senses.

156. But to attain to this, we must, of necessity, proceed with uprightness and sincerity of intention and seek, in the satisfaction we allow the palate, eyes, ears and tongue, God's will alone and His good pleasure, or some other of those lawful ends enumerated in the foregoing Chapter. For in acting thus, the will does not attach itself to the gratification which, for a just cause, it allows the senses, but to the will and good pleasure of God and to the moral goodness of the other objects which it may have in view: so that itself remains free and disengaged from this low and material pleasure. Because, as we have before observed, uprightness of intention is essential to the virtue of temperance, whether it be concerned with the outward regulation of the sensations or with the inward moderation of the will.

non flentes; et qui gaudent, tamquam non gaudentes; et qui emunt, tamquam non possidentes; et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tamquam non utantur. I Ad Cor. vij. 29-31.

ARTICLE V.

The Virtue of Religion.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION.

157. HAVING now set forth the nature and the practical character of the four Cardinal Virtues, it remains for us to treat of their potential parts, as St. Thomas styles the other Moral Virtues. By this term, *potential parts*, the holy Doctor implies that, to a certain extent, they have points in common with some cardinal virtue, from which they nevertheless differ in some one particular. Such, for instance, is religion with respect to justice; for justice requires that we give every one his due, and religion requires that we give to God the worship that belongs to Him. So far these two admirable virtues agree, but still are they unlike, as justice requires that our payment be fully equal to the debt; while religion can never give to God all the honour to which He has a right, as His claim is simply infinite, while the acts of homage which religion can produce in us are limited. It must, however, be borne in mind that, in order not to extend the present Section to an exorbitant length, I do not intend to speak of all the moral virtues which are potential and subaltern parts of the cardinal virtues; I mean to treat of none but those that are most deserving of mention, which, by taking possession of the soul, introduce into it, by a sort of natural sequence, the others which are of less importance.

158. Treating then, of religion, the Angelic Doctor says, that it is a virtue which pays God the homage due to Him, inasmuch as He is the First Cause, the Maker, and Preserver of all things.*

* Ad religionem pertinet exhibere reverentiam uni Deo, secundum unam rationem, in quantum scilicet est principium creationis, et gubernationis rerum. 2, 2, quæst. 81, art. 3.

It must be observed that honour is due to every one who is endowed with any excellent gift. Honour is due to a king on account of his eminent dignity: to a learned man on account of the extent of his great knowledge: to a man of particularly holy life on account of the singular lustre of his virtues. Hence, to God, Whose excellence is infinite and Who, by His Almighty power, imparts being to all things and preserves them in it, the highest honour is due, and this we pay Him by acts of worship which in themselves are nothing but a sincere protestation of His boundless excellency.

159. The goodness of God, which is infinitely inclined to be favourable to us, may supply religion with an additional motive to pay Him fitting homage. As this is the first principle and the fountain-head of all the good we enjoy, even our sins and miseries may furnish this virtue with motives for exercising acts of self-abasement and of lowly reverence; for, by humbling us before God, they make us bow down more lowly before His incomparable greatness, and cause our acts of reverence, veneration, and homage to redound to His greater honour. It is, moreover, certain that praise is an act of religion, since it gives glory to the Almighty, as we shall see later on. Hence St. Augustine, commenting on the words of the ninety-fourth Psalm, *Let us come before his face with confession*, says, that to confess our sins before God is to proclaim His praise and to give Him glory, even as a sick man gives praise to the physician who heals him, and so much the greater praise as his malady was the more desperate.* We may hence infer that whatever shows homage, reverence, and subjection to God—every service in protestation of his sovereign excellence—is an act of worship and of religion.

* Numquid et hoc non pertinet ad laudem Dei, quando confiteris peccata tua? Immo verò maxime pertinet ad laudem Dei, quando confiteris peccata tua. Quia tanto amplius laudatur medicus, quanto plus desperabatur ægrotus. Confitere itaque peccata tua, quo magis desperabas de te propter iniquitates tuas. Tanto enim major laus est ignoscentis, quanto major est exaggeratio peccata committentis. Non enim putemus nos recessisse a laude cantici, si jam hic confessionem intelligamus, quâ confitemur peccata nostra. Et hoc ad laudem cantici pertinet, quia cum peccata nostra cognoscimus, Dei gloriam commendamus. In Psal. xciv.

160. The excellence of this virtue may easily be inferred from the observation of St. Thomas, that although we may not number it among the goodly fellowships of the theological virtues, it holds the first rank among all the moral virtues, as being the most illustrious and the most exalted.* It is not a theological virtue, because it has not God for its immediate object, as is the case with faith, which believes in God, and is moved to such belief by God Himself; that is, by His wisdom which cannot fail, and by His truth which cannot deceive us. So, too, hope looks to the possession of God, and finds in Him its grounds for awaiting so great a good; that is, looks to the Almighty power which enables, and to the faithfulness which inclines, God to fulfil the promise he has made us that we shall possess Him. So, again, charity, which loves God, and is moved to love Him by Himself, that is, by His immense goodness. Not so religion, the immediate object of which is the honour and inner and outward worship of God, and hence is concerned, not directly with God, but with those actions by which we honour God; and it is moved to these acts by the consideration of the goodness which it discovers in them, inasmuch as it sees that they are due to His infinite excellency: this notwithstanding, religion ranks far above all the moral virtues, and outshines them all, as it approaches more nearly to God than any of the rest. True, it does not take God Himself as its immediate aim; yet, by ordering the acts proper to itself, and rendering them obsequious and reverent, it seeks the honour and glory of God which results from such acts, and hence is in closest contact with God.†

161. Nothing can concern God more closely than His own honour. Indeed, the honour of the Almighty seems, so to speak, to be that which touches Him more immediately than anything else. Hence, no virtue brings us so near to God as religion, which, by the acts to which it prompts us, procures this honour

* 2, 2, quæst. 81, art. 5 et 6.

† Religio magis de propinquo accedit ad Deum quam aliæ virtutes morales, in quantum operatur ea, quæ directe et immediate ordinantur in honorem divinum; et ideo religio præeminet inter alias virtutes morales. Ibid. art. 6.

to God. Now, if among the solar rays the brightest are those which are the nearest to the sun, if the stream becomes purer as we approach its source, it must needs hold good that the most resplendent of the moral virtues will be that which lies nearest to the Uncreated Light; that the purest and most perfect of them is that which is closest to the inexhaustible fount of all perfection. And if in the courts of princes those are deemed to be the most illustrious who are placed nearest to the royal throne on which the king himself is seated, who can doubt that among the moral virtues those are the most illustrious, the boast of which it is that their acts are nearest to the King of Heaven and Creator of the Universe?

162. To this may be added another reason alleged by the Angelic Doctor, which may serve to set the pre-eminence of this virtue in a still clearer light. He teaches that in its essence religion is one and the self-same with sanctity.* Religion, he writes, pays homage to God, by certain acts of special worship, such as sacrifices, offerings, prostrations and the like. Sanctity, under the inspiration of religion, directs the same acts to the honour and worship of God, along with the acts proper to itself; whereby it sanctifies its subject, so that it coincides with religion, and consequently religion comes to be identified with sanctity. And indeed St. James says: *Religion pure and undefiled in the sight of God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.*† At first sight one would say that this conduct showed mercy, charity, detachment and purity, rather than religion. But no; for it has been well said by the Apostle that the practice of these virtues, under the impulse of religion, with a view to do honour to God and to the service of the Most High, is to be accounted religion; and as such they have the singular honour of approaching closest to God. So that all any one has

* Sanctitas dicitur, per quam mens hominis se ipsam et suos actus applicat Deo, unde non differt a religione secundum suam essentiam, sed solum ratione. Ut supra, art. 7.

† Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem hæc est, visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum, et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo. Jac. i. 27.

to do in order to become a saint is to attain a perfect degree of religion.

163. But if we would gain a clearer notion of the excellency of this virtue, we have but to consider the great esteem in which it is held by the holy Angels, and the fervour and devotion wherewith they practise it, not only in heaven, but even here below, where they deign frequently to descend in order to accompany, and to worship with reverent homage, their Divine Maker. St. John Chrysostom says, that at the celebration of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass (which is assuredly the chief act of religion) the holy Angels come down from heaven in numerous bands, and crowd around the Altar to pay homage to the God Who immolates Himself thereupon; and that they sing sweet hymns of praise, standing full of reverence by the minister who offers the spotless Victim to the Most High.* He proceeds to relate a vision vouchsafed to a holy old man to whom God often discovered His secrets; and tells us, that he beheld a great multitude of Angels surrounding the Altar whereon the unbloody Sacrifice was being offered; that they were all clad in resplendent robes, and were bowed down in lowly adoration, like soldiers and courtiers in the presence of their king. And having put this fact on record, he gives it the credit of his own authority, declaring that he believes it to be true.†

164. No wonder that the holy Doctor should have believed this on the faith of a vision vouchsafed to another, when he himself had frequently beheld the like, and, as Baronius relates, was wont, on entering the church, to see it full of Angels, who adored with lowly homage their God abiding therein; and this especially at the time of the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice.‡

* Per id tempus et Angeli sacerdoti assident, et cœlestium potestatum universus ordo clamores excitat, et locus altari vicinus, in illius honorem qui immolatur, Angelorum choris plenus est. Id quod credere abunde licet vel ex tanto illo sacrificio, quod tunc peragitur. De Sacerdotio, lib. vj.

† Id quod facile mihi ipse persuadeo. Ibid.

‡ Joannes Chrysostomus sacerdos admirandus, Ecclesiæ Constantinopolitanæ, immo vero totius orbis splendor, vir animi perspicacis, omni fere tempore videbat domum Domini refertam Angelorum cœtu, et tunc in primis cum Divinum et incruentum Sacrificium offerebatur. Baron., tom. v., Annal. A.D. 407.

Hence the celebrated historian goes on to say, that the Saint used at times to inform his most intimate friends, in a tone of glad astonishment, that when the Priest began the holy Mass, he beheld, descending from above, Angels with shining countenances, clad in resplendent raiment, who, barefooted, placed themselves around the Altar and, with attentive gaze and head bowed down, adored in reverent silence the tremendous mysteries. He next saw them arise and accompany the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, during the distribution of the consecrated elements to the people. The reader may gather from this, how singular is the excellence of this virtue of religion, and how worthy of esteem, since the Angels, not content with practising it in heaven, which is their home, come down to take part in our worship here below, and appear to our eyes, at times, in postures thus devout, lowly and reverential, on purpose to incite us to follow their example.

CHAPTER II.

THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE ACTS OF WORSHIP BY WHICH WE PRACTISE THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION. THE SEVERAL KINDS OF WORSHIP.

165. It is obvious that the virtues derive all their splendour from our inward acts. For, as our bodies receive their rational nature from the soul, as plants draw their life from their roots, and as the planets get their light from the sun, so the outward acts of virtue derive from the inward acts of our mind and heart the goodness, the supernatural value, the lustre and charm which make them pleasing in God's sight; while our inward acts themselves draw their merit from the motive and, if they be supernatural, from the grace by whose aid they are performed. Now as a soulless body is nothing but a loathsome corpse, a tree severed from its root a mere log, and a planet, in like manner, without the sun, a dark mass of matter; so too, virtue, unless accompanied by inward acts,

is not really virtue, but the corpse and counterfeit of virtue. The same holds good of the virtue of religion, which derives all its excellence from the inward acts by which the soul, acknowledging the boundless perfection of God, its loving Maker and continual Preserver, and conscious, on the other hand, how low, mean, and vile it is, bows down in lowliest subjection before the Supreme Majesty. In this inward act of subjection it is that the worship we pay to God mainly consists. Apart from it, the outward homage we may render is but a mere shadow of worship, a lifeless image of virtue.

166. St. Thomas teaches that God demands our homage, not for His own advantage—as He receives immeasurable glory from Himself—but for our benefit, since our bending before Him in humble homage helps us on towards our own perfection.* For it must be borne in mind that every inferior being (as the same holy Doctor says) is made more perfect by subjection to some being that is above it. Thus the body, by subjecting itself to the soul, gains life, growth, sensibility, and reason; the atmosphere, by admitting the solar rays, becomes luminous and genial; and thus, too, in mechanical arts, clay, by submitting to the hands of the potter, becomes a handsome vase; marble in the hands of the sculptor, from a rough-hewn mass, is made into a fine statue, to be set up in a gallery for the delight of princely eyes, or to be exposed on the altars for the veneration of the faithful. Thus also, the soul, by heartfelt and lowly subjection to God, Whom it acknowledges as infinitely superior to itself, becomes perfect in His sight. This is precisely what Augustine implies when he says, That the due worship of God is to the advantage of man, not of God. For who would ever dream that it was a benefit to the fountain that we should drink of its waters, or to the light that we should gaze upon it?†

* Dicendum, quod Deo reverentiam et honorem exhibemus, non propter seipsum, quia in seipso est gloriâ plenus, cui nihil a creaturâ adjici potest; sed propter nos, quia videlicet in hoc quod Deum reveremur et honoramus, mens nostra ei subjicitur, et in hoc ejus perfectio consistit. 2, 2, quæst. 81, art. 7.

† Quod recte colitur Deus, homini prodesse non Deo, neque enim quisquam fonti dixerit profuisse, si biberit; aut luci, si viderit. De Civit. Dei, lib. x., cap. 5.

167. This is why God complained of the Jews, many of whom, while offering sacrifice, did not join that inward homage of the heart, which is the soul of all worship offered to the Almighty. The complaint I allude to may be found in the Psalms. The Lord says: "Think you that I shall eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Mine are all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every fowl of the air, and the beauty of the fields is Mine.† If you would offer unto Me acceptable victims, join to the visible sacrifice the inner oblation of the heart. Offer to God a sacrifice of praise, and pay your vows unto the Most High."‡ Whence the reader should learn, that in performing acts of religion, he must begin by casting a glance at God's supreme perfection and at his own nothingness, and must honour the Lord with his heart's lowliest subjection; this being the main and most essential part of the homage which the Most High seeks at our hands.

168. It by no means follows from this that we are to omit outward acts of religion, or that these do not belong to the virtue of religion. To assert this would be to fall into the error of those heretics who reject ecclesiastical ceremonies and the public worship of the Church; and to say with the Tritheists, that we ought to worship God in spirit alone.§ It is one thing to say that outward acts of piety, entirely devoid of any inward spirit, are not real acts of religion, and another to assert, that even when animated by the sentiments of the heart, they do not constitute a true worship, such as is due to our Sovereign Lord and Maker. The former of these positions is true: the latter is not only false, but is, moreover, a detestable heresy. Were we pure spirits, like the Angels, or the departed souls in heaven, with them we might worship God with mental acts only; but being a compound of spirit and flesh, what reason can there be why we should not

* Manducabo carnes taurorum, aut sanguinem hircorum potabo? Psal. xlix. 13.

† Meæ sunt feræ sylvarum, jumenta in montibus et boves. Cognovi omnia volatilia cœli, et pulchritudo agri mecum est.

‡ Immola Deo sacrificium laudis, et redde Altissimo vota tua.

§ Solo spiritu Deum adorare debemus.

offer Him the homage of our lower nature? Is it because God Who has given us our souls is not likewise the Maker of our bodies? Is He not the first principle of the body as well as of the soul? Why then should not the body acknowledge its Divine Maker by acts proper to itself, and render to Him its homage of reverence and service?

169. To maintain such an assertion would be a folly of benighted minds. The holy Council of Trent has long since declared it to be a heresy, saying, that such is the condition of human nature, that it is hard for it to rise to the contemplation of heavenly things without the assistance of visible objects: for which reason holy Mother Church has established certain rites, as for instance, the differences of tone in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where some parts are said aloud, and others in secret. The Church has also ever made use of certain devout ceremonies, as lights, incense, vestments, blessings of mystical import, and such like things, handed down by Apostolic tradition; and these have been employed with a view of setting the majesty of so great a Sacrifice in higher relief, and of raising the minds and hearts of the faithful, by such sensible tokens of religion and piety, to the contemplation of the sublime truths involved in this Sacrifice.*

170. The reason alleged by the holy Council for the necessity of outward rites and acts of religion is most convincing. As long as our soul is bound up with this frail body, it cannot perform its spiritual acts, or rise to the consideration of the supernatural, without the co-operation of the interior senses; and these being dependent on outward sensations, the soul cannot easily perform its spiritual functions without the intervention of these

* Cum natura hominum ea sit quæ non facile queat sine adminiculis exterioribus ad rerum divinarum meditationem sustolli, propterea pia mater Ecclesia ritus quosdam, ut scilicet quædam submissâ voce, alia vero altiore in Missâ pronuntiarentur, instituit. Cæremonias item adhibuit, ut mysticas benedictiones, lumina, thymiamata, vestes, aliaque id genus multa ex apostolicâ disciplinâ et traditione, quo et majestas tanti Sacrificii commendaretur et mentes fidelium per hæc visibilia religionis, et pietatis signa ad rerum altissimarum, quæ in hoc sacrificio latent, contemplationem excitarentur. Sess. xxj., cap. 5.

latter. This is what the Apostle alludes to when he says, that *The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made.** Whence we may infer that if we would rightly worship God, Who is so deserving of our homage on account of His boundless excellence, we must needs perform outward acts, and make use of objects of sense both to move ourselves and to stir up others to pay Him due homage.

171. And to be plain, who does not experience in his own case how much this outward worship avails to awaken in us the contemplation and veneration of the mysteries of Heaven? Who is there but, when he sees, on certain yearly recurring days, the Churches stripped of their ornaments, the Altars bared, the Crosses and holy images veiled, the bells and organs silenced, the ministers of the sanctuary performing their sacred functions in the garb of mourning, with plaintive chants; and watches them going with clasped hands, heads bowed down, and barefooted to adore the Cross, or lying prostrate at the foot of the Altar,—who, I say, is there but must feel himself, amid this solemn silence, these sights suggestive of woe, moved to compunction, stirred up to the consideration of the Passion and death of our dear Redeemer, which the Church recalls to our minds by these mournful ceremonies? And when the scene changing, the Churches are decked anew and the Altars are adorned, the Priests appear in the garb of joy, the air resounds with gladsome songs and strains of music, who does not feel re-awakened within him the memory of the risen Christ, of Whom the joyous festival is being celebrated? Who can conceal from himself that his heart is glowing afresh with feelings of joy and congratulation on account of the unspeakable happiness of Jesus, the Conqueror of Death? Who, in beholding the magnificence of our Churches, the splendour of the altars, the sumptuousness of the vestments, the richness of the brocades, the embroidery, the gold and silver, with which they are adorned, can help conceiving a high esteem for the holy place, and a deeper reverence for the sacred mysteries which are there performed? So that what the holy Council of Trent states is an obvious truth; that

* Invisibilia Dei a creaturâ mundi, per ea quæ facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur. Ad Rom. i. 20.

outward worship, besides being due to God (as we have said above) is further needed in order to raise our minds to the contemplation, and our hearts to the veneration, of divine things. We must hold fast to the conviction that, as long as we are in this vale of tears, though our minds be ever so refined and cultivated, we are still engrossed in matter, and need the aid of material objects to lift us up to the knowledge of heavenly things.

172. Let me here relate a fact connected with the history of king Clovis.* Having been converted to the faith, and initiated by the holy Bishop Remigius in the truth necessary to be known, this prince went to the church to be washed and born anew to God in the waters of baptism. The road between the royal palace and the basilica was superbly adorned, shaded by hangings suspended from above, the walls of the houses were draped with costly silks, the Church where the baptism was to take place was decked out in all its splendour, and in it a sumptuous baptistery was erected, while the air was laden with delicious perfumes. The solemn procession was headed with the whole body of the Clergy, one of them bearing the book of the Holy Gospels; it was preceded by the Cross and a quantity of lighted torches, and all implored in melodious tones the help of God and His saints, in the usual prayers of the Church. The king followed, being led on by the hand of the saintly Bishop; the queen came next, and in her train there followed an innumerable crowd. The king, on beholding the long line of sacred ministers, and hearing their hallowed chants, and being impressed with the devout splendour of the function, was inwardly moved, and filled with such consolation that, turning round to the Prelate, he asked whether perchance this were the kingdom of God which had been promised to him should he embrace the faith? "No, sire," replied St. Remigius, "this is not the kingdom I promised you, but the way that leads thereto." Hence we may learn the powerful influence which the sacred rites connected with God's worship can exert over our minds, since they availed to soften the heart of the fierce conqueror accustomed to live amid regal splendour, and to make him think that he was in heaven, when only on the path

* In Vitâ S. Remig. Apud Surium, 13 Jan.

thereto. We may therefore conclude that religious worship mainly consists in inward acts of submission to the sovereign perfection of God, but secondarily in the outward acts which serve to give expression to, and to awaken within ourselves and others, the sentiment of heartfelt self-abasement in the presence of our Maker.

173. It must further be borne in mind that religious homage differs according to the various persons to whom it is paid. When God is its object, it is styled the worship of *latria*, since we honour in Him that infinite perfection which He has of Himself, and which He owes to none. The worship that we address to the saints is called *dulia*, because we honour in them the finite and limited perfection, which they cannot have of their own power, but which God imparts to them as to His faithful servants, and friends, and the favourite courtiers of the heavenly abode. The honour paid to the Blessed Virgin is called *hyperdulia*, as, although the excellence which we honour in her is finite, yet does it far surpass that of the saints, since she is the Mother of God, and the Queen of the Heavenly Host, endowed far beyond them all with the choicest prerogatives. Thus the worship we pay the saints and their Queen redounds, in the end, to the honour of God, as the Seventh Œcumenical Council teaches. "We venerate the saints as the friends of God, and the honour we pay them returns to God. He who honours a martyr, worships God, and he who honours the Mother of God, pays homage to her Divine Son.*

CHAPTER III.

THE SPECIAL ACTS BY WHICH THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION IS PRACTISED.

174. HAVING thus set forth the essence of divine worship, we next proceed to treat of the particular acts by which it is per-

* Sanctos veneramur ut Dei amicos; et honor qui sanctis impenditur, in Deum recurrit: qui martyrem colit, Deum ipsum colit; qui matrem ipsius adorat, ipsi honorem assignat. Synod. Œcum. vii., Act. 4.

formed, and consequently by which we may practise the virtue of religion, which is nothing but a habit producing such acts, or a facility in their exercise. Amongst acts of worship we may count prostration or bowing down our body, when performed in the spirit we have explained in the foregoing Chapter. For in the Divine Scriptures I know we meet with many instances of prostration which have no connection with religious worship. Thus Jacob prostrated himself seven times before his brother Esau.* Joseph was worshipped by his brethren, who bowed down in his presence.† So too, the Sons of the Prophets, seeing that the spirit of Elias had fallen on Eliseus, venerated him by bowing down to the ground.‡ But these several acts of homage were acts not of religious worship, but of sincere reverence shown to mortal men on account of some special gift or endowment for which they were distinguished. The adoration of which we speak is the lowly submission and homage paid by us to the immense majesty of Almighty God. Such, for instance, was the adoration paid to God by the people of Israel in the Temple, on the festival day when king Solomon celebrated the feast of its Dedication with so much grandeur. The inspired text informs us that after the king had poured forth his prayer, fire came from above and burnt the victims and the holocausts, and that the glory of the Lord filled the Temple.§ That is—as Cornelius à Lapide explains it—a bright and luminous cloud spread throughout the Temple, as a visible token of the majesty and unseen glory of God.‖ At this sight the Jews fell with their faces on the marble pavement, and with obsequious homage worshipped the Divine Majesty.¶

* Et ipse progrediens adoravit pronus in terram septies, donec appropinquaret frater ejus. Genes. xxxiij. 3.

† Et incurvati adoraverunt eum. Genes. xliij. 39.

‡ Videntes autem filii prophetarum, qui erant in Jericho e contra, dixerunt: Requievit spiritus Eliæ super Eliseum. Et venientes in occursum ejus, adoraverunt eum proni in terram. IV. Reg. ij. 15.

§ Ignis descendit de cœlo, et devoravit holocausta, et victimas; et majestas Domini implevit domum. II. Paralip. vij. 1.

‖ Majestas Domini, id est gloria, puta caligo, sive nubes splendida et gloriosa, Dei invisibilis majestatem, et gloriam repræsentans.

¶ Et corruentes proni in terram super pavimentum stratum lapide, adoraverunt, et laudaverunt Dominum.

175. When we wish to practise the like acts of adoration, we may represent the Divine Majesty—since it is out of our power to behold, as did the Israelites, the visible presence of the Almighty—to ourselves in those colours which faith supplies. We can, for instance, consider our God as infinitely superior to all creatures, by the boundless dominion which He has over them, as being their Creator. This was the practice of St. Augustine, who, commenting on those words of the ninety-sixth Psalm, "For Thou, O Lord, art most high above all the earth: Thou art exalted far above all gods," says, "Yea, not only above the false gods, which are devils, but above all men, especially the just, who share in the glorious name of God; and above all the Angelic Hierarchies:—in a word, infinitely above whatever has been, or can be, created."* Let us then, with the most heartfelt lowliness, prostrate ourselves before that immense Majesty.

176. But as our deepest self-abasement is immeasurably inferior to His sovereign excellence, let us own this excellence with all the humility that we can command, after the example of the Seraphim in heaven, who, after having adored and rehearsed the praises of God in their glorious hymn, the Trisagion, *Holy*, *Holy*, *Holy*, veil their faces with their wings, to declare that their homage is infinitely inferior to His boundless merit. This is the meaning assigned by St. John Chrysostom to this act of theirs.† Thus will a humble confession enable us to make up for that far deeper self-abasement which, though due to God's infinite majesty, is far beyond our power to attain.

177. But this inner sentiment must be accompanied by suitable external actions, such as genuflections, bowings down, and also vocal expressions, according to the example of the people of

* Quoniam tu Dominus Altissimus super omnem terram, nimis exaltatus es super omnes deos. Nec solum super dæmonia, sed etiam super homines, maxime justos, qui dicuntur dii: et hoc parum est, super omnes Angelos. In Psal. xcvj.

† Cum enim plurimam habeant erga Conditorem reverentiam, hanc undequaque conantur præstare: deinde cum non assequantur quod expetunt, quod deest affectui, hoc velo obtegunt. Hanc ob causam igitur facies ac pedes tegere dicuntur. Hom. i. in Isaiam.

Israel.* Because, though God already beholds our inner self-abasement, nor is there any need of this being made manifest by outward acts, still, as St. Augustine observes, and as we have already laid down, humble postures help somehow or other to intensify the emotion from which they proceed.†

178. So addicted were the saints to these acts of religious veneration, that they may appear to us, lukewarm and indifferent as we are, to have pushed them to excess. Holy Church tells of St. Francis Borgia, that he daily adored God a hundred times on bended knees.‡ We read also that St. Patrick kept up the practice of adoring God on bended knees, three hundred times every day.§ Marulus relates that St. Martha knelt on the ground one hundred times each day, and one hundred times each night, in worship of that God now reigning in heaven, Whom, when on earth, she had received as a guest in her house.‖ The like is recorded of St. Simeon Stylites on his column. Nor are there wanting nowadays godly men (and I myself am intimate with some among them) who practise the like devout exercises with an extraordinary frequency. We should all imitate these in a certain measure, if, as subjects of the Heavenly King, we desire to pay Him due homage; being assured that, as the kings of the earth are gratified by the tokens of the submission of their subjects, so too the Monarch of the Universe is well pleased when frequent acts of homage are paid to Him by His creatures.

* Corruentes proni in terram super pavimentum stratum lapide adoraverunt. II. Paralip. vij. 3.

† Orantes de membris sui corporis faciunt quod supplicantibus congruit, cum genua figunt, cum extendunt manus, vel etiam prosternuntur solo; et si quid aliud visibiliter faciunt. Quamvis eorum invisibilis voluntas, et cordis intentio Deo nota sit, nec ille indigeat his indiciis, ut humanus ei pandatur animus; sed his magis se ipsum excitat homo ad orandum, gemendumque humilius et vehementius. Et nescio quomodo, cum hi motus corporis fieri, nisi motu animi præcedente, non possint, eisdemque rursus exterius visibiliter factis, ille interior invisibilis, qui eos facit, augetur: ac per hoc cordis affectus, qui ut fierent illa præcessit, quia facta sunt, crescit. De Curâ pro Mort. Gerend., cap. 5.

‡ Centies quotidie de genu Deum adorabat.

§ Tercenties per dies singulos flexis genibus Deum adorare.

‖ Lib. ij., cap. 1.

179. It is an act of Worship to join praise to these prostrations, as is recorded of the Israelites in the text already quoted. These, having prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground in order to adore the Most High, all with one accord broke forth into songs of praise, extolling in a loud voice the infinite, eternal, and boundless goodness of God Almighty, Who granted them this most great favour.* Lactantius says, that among the acts of worship whereby we pay divine homage, the highest place is held by that of praise uttered by the just man in order to extol the greatness of God.† And in truth, the praises addressed to God contain a marked protestation of His divine perfection. And further we may see with what jubilation the Psalmist burst forth in accents of praise to the Most High, and how, after having extolled the Almighty with the most fervent affections of the heart, he summons all creatures to join in praising the Creator, calling upon all the nations of the earth, the Angels in heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, the seas and all that is in them, the storms, the mountains and valleys, woods and fields, in a word, upon everything to give glory to God ;‡ in order that their united praise may supply that which he himself fain would give, but which his own heart is too narrow to produce. In like manner the three Babylonish children, in their Canticle, invite all the works of God to praise and evermore exalt Him Who, by a stupendous miracle, had preserved them scatheless amid the raging flames.§ Such, too, should be our conduct, if we have the slightest care for God's honour. In our prayers we should set ourselves to consider the boundless might of God, which called out of nothing so many beauteous creatures that shine in the heavens and adorn the face of the earth: we should ponder the providence which governs everything, the goodness

* Adoraverunt et laudaverunt Dominum, quoniam bonus, quoniam in æternum misericordia ejus.

† Summus colendi Deum ritus est, ex ore justi hominis ad Deum directa laudatio. Inst., lib. vi., cap. 25.

‡ Afferte Domino gloriam et honorem; afferte Domino gloriam nomini ejus. Psal. xxviij. 2.

§ Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino, laudate et superexaltate eum in sæcula. Dan. iij. 57.

which upholds them, the wisdom that knows all, penetrates and beholds all, the immensity whereby God is everywhere present and confined to no place, the infinite Majesty before which the highest Seraphim tremble, the unspeakable beauty which ravishes the heavenly choirs in joyous ecstasy. Thus too, should we pay the tribute of praise to every one of God's perfections and rehearse in their honour a canticle of benediction. We should further frequently think on the favours which our God vouchsafes to us; both on the general benefits of creation, preservation, redemption, and also on the special blessings which He imparts to us every moment, whether in the order of nature or in the far higher sphere of grace: exalting Him for each of these with heartfelt gratitude, and inviting all creation to help us to praise Him. This is an exercise of worship and of religion, no less acceptable to God, than due to His incomprehensible excellency.

180. Another act of worship is prayer. I will not tarry long on this point, as it formed the subject-matter of the sixth Article of the first Section. I will content myself with making some brief remarks upon petition, in so far as it is an act of worship. That it is an act of worship is unquestionable, for to this excellent virtue of religion belong all those acts which show reverence and homage to the supreme and eminent perfections of God. Beyond all doubt, whoever calls upon the Almighty, by that very act acknowledges His beneficence, liberality, providence, goodness and mercy: he makes protest that this same God is generous, open-handed, good, merciful, the Author and Fountain of all that is good in him: and hence, humbles himself with lowly sentiments before these several Divine attributes, and by his self-abasement renders to them honour and glory. The Psalmist, in order to express how pleasing to God is the honour resulting from prayer, compares it to the incense which rises into the air in clouds of perfume and spreads its sweetness all around.* And the Gloss adds, by way of comment, that under the old law incense was offered on God's altar, as an emblem of the sweet savour wherewith our prayers ascend to the Almighty. Nay, more; St. Thomas distinctly asserts that

* Dirigatur oratio mea, sicut incensum in conspectu tuo. Psal. cxl. 4.

prayer is the chief act of religious worship; and he gives as the reason that in prayer we render to God the homage of our minds, the noblest part of man, which gives direction to all actions and outward behaviour appertaining to God's worship; and that consequently prayer is the chief among all acts of worship and religion.*

181. The reader will now perceive why the servants of God are so given to this devout exercise, that prayer seems to be to them what water is to a fish or air to a bird: it is the native element in which they live. Cassian relates† that the ancient Fathers ever had on their lips the opening words of the sixty-ninth Psalm: *O God, come to my aid. O Lord, make haste to help me.*‡ Cassiodorus narrates of Paul of Lybia, the father and guide of five hundred monks, that no single day passed without his putting up to God three hundred devout petitions. Palladius says of a certain devout maiden, that she prayed daily seven hundred times.§ St. Jerome relates of St. James the Apostle, that his unceasing supplications for his people had hardened his knees, so that they had the appearance of being covered with camel's hide.‖ The Abbot John bears witness that he had seen with his own eyes a cavity four inches deep in the places where a holy old man of the Thebaid was accustomed to rest his knees and elbows; so much addicted was he to the exercise of prayer.¶ The saints knew full well what honour redounds to God from our petitions, presented in a spirit of lowly dependence upon Him Who is the author and fountain-head of all our good. And hence they never wearied of making

* Orando tradit homo mentem suam Deo, quam ei per reverentiam subjicit, et quodammodo præsentat, ut patet ex auctoritate Dionysii prius inductâ. Et ideo sicut mens humana præeminet exterioribus et corporalibus membris, vel exterioribus rebus, quæ ad Dei servitium applicantur, ita etiam oratio præeminet aliis actibus religionis. 2, 2, quæst. 8, art 3, ad 3.

† Instit. lib. viij., cap. 1.

‡ Deus in adjutorium meum intende, Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina.

§ In Hist. Lausiac., cap. 24.

‖ Et flexis genibus pro populo deprecabatur in tantum, ut camelorum duritiem traxisse ejus genua crederentur. De Viris Illustr.

¶ Sophron. Prat. Spirit., cap. 284.

supplication, nor of bowing down in the humble posture of suppliants. Let us, in like manner, find our delight in the frequent use of prayer and supplication, which, over and above the other many advantages resulting from it, inasmuch as it is the channel whereby we receive every grace (as was shown in the first section), will moreover enable us to give great honour to God.

CHAPTER IV.

OTHER ACTS OF WORSHIP WHICH BELONG TO THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION. AMONG THESE SACRIFICE IS THE PRINCIPAL.

182. So true is it that among the acts of worship which we perform in God's honour, Sacrifice is the chief, that we should be bound, by an impulse of our reasonable nature, to offer it to the Almighty, even had He not formally required it of us. For natural reason dictates that the prerogative of the Maker of all things should be acknowledged by some sensible gift in token of submission to His supreme sovereignty; even as subjects, by the taxes which they pay to their rulers, show recognition of their sovereign authority. Hence, we see that not only did the Jews and Christians, both under the Old and New Covenant, ever offer sacrifice to God, but that this has at all times, even amid the most barbarous tribes, formed part of the worship which they paid to the false deities whom, in their blindness, they mistook for gods.* St. Thomas, whose doctrine we delight to quote, explaining the essence of that kind of sacrifice which is rigorously due to the supreme majesty of the Most High God, says that we have what is strictly called a sacrifice whenever some action is performed with reference to things offered to God, as when animals are slain and burnt, or bread blessed, broken and consumed; and this is

* Ex naturali ratione procedit, quod homo quibusdam sensibilibus rebus utatur, offerens eas Deo in signum debitæ subjectionis et honoris, secundum similitudinem eorum, qui dominis suis aliqua offerunt in recognitionem dominii. 2, 2, quæst. 85, art. 1.

the proper meaning of the word; for *sacrifice* is derived from the fact of man performing a sacred rite. Hence the holy Doctor concludes that sacrifice is nothing but an offering made to God of some visible object, in protestation of His boundless perfection as our First Beginning and Last End, with the addition, however, of some action performed on the thing offered.*

183. In sacrifice the offering must be some visible object. As it has to signify our subjection to the supreme dominion of the Maker of all things, some action must be performed on it. This is implied by the very word *sacrifice* itself, which signifies the doing of some sacred action, as the Israelites did in olden times when, in offering their victims, they flayed them or consumed them in the fire; and as Christian Priests now do, in the devout ceremonies they perform with the consecrated Host and Cup, which contain the Victim presented to the Eternal Father. Hence, it follows, that to make to God the offering of the bread and wine, by merely placing them upon the Altar in His divine sight, would not be a sacrifice, since, in such case, there would be wanting the action which is of the essence of sacrifice. And it should be here observed that the victim and the manner of its oblation are not left to our choice, but must be determined by law, and performed by chosen ministers, as, in fact, God in the old Covenant, and our Redeemer in the New Testament, have established.

184. Further, the offering must be made in protestation of God's excellence; for, as St. Thomas again teaches, the visible sacrifice is performed in order to give expression to the inner oblation by which the soul offers itself as a holocaust to God.† And this it is that God would have the Israelites understand by the words of the Psalm adduced above, where He tells them that the beasts of the forest, the cattle on the hills, the oxen, calves, and rams, which they slaughtered at His Altar, were His, and that

* Dicendum quod sacrificia proprie dicuntur, quando circa res Deo oblatas aliquid fit; quod animalia occidebantur et comburebantur; quod panis frangitur, comeditur et benedicitur, et hoc ipsum nomen sonat: nam sacrificia dicuntur ex hoc, quod homo facit aliquid sacrum. Ibid., art. 3, ad 3.

† Significat sacrificium, quod offertur exterius, interius spirituale sacrificium, quo anima se ipsam offert Deo. Ibid., art. 2.

He required of them that they should offer to Him a sacrifice of praise, of the interior and sincere affections of their hearts.*

185. From what has been said hitherto, it follows that sacrifice must not be offered to the saints: it is reserved to God alone. For the saints have no shadow of right to the honour which sacrifice is intended to give, namely, the acknowledgment that He to Whom we sacrifice is the First Beginning, from Whom we derive our life and being, and our Last End, in Whom all our happiness consists; and further, the recognition of our complete subjection to Him, which is witnessed by some outward actions; —a homage due, as is obvious, to God alone. As St. Augustine says, we may find the parallel of this in the homage paid to the rulers and kings of the earth, which could not be paid to others without incurring the guilt of treason.† It is, indeed, lawful to offer sacrifice to God, in memory of the saints, in thanksgiving to the Most High for the glory wherewith He has been pleased to exalt them, or in order to obtain their protection and to implore some favour through their intercession. Because the saints take great delight in seeing us help them to thank God for the immeasurable happiness which He has bestowed upon them, especially when we make use of an action so holy and so honourable and acceptable to God. Hence, they are moved to become our patrons and protectors and to win for us, by their prayers on our behalf, the graces and favours for which we ask through their intercession. What has been said of sacrifice holds good of the consecration of Churches and Altars, which, for a like reason, are dedicated to God alone, although, as St. Augustine observes they may be erected to the memory of the martyrs.‡ In all such dedications, the saints have a share, only under those titles of which we have spoken above and which are so honourable to them.

* Meæ sunt feræ silvarum, jumenta in montibus, et boves, etc. Immola Deo sacrificium laudis, et redde altissimo vota tua.

† Hoc enim videmus in omni republicâ observari, quod summum rectorem aliquo signo singulari honorant, quod cuicumque alteri deferretur, esset crimen læsæ majestatis. De Civit. Dei, lib. x., cap. 19.

‡ Nulli martyrum, sed ipsi Deo martyrum sacrificamus; quamvis in memorias martyrum constituamus altaria. Contra Faustum, lib. iij., cap. 21.

186. Hence, too, may be gathered how far our sacrifices excel those of the Old Law, as we no longer offer vile and worthless oxen, heifers, and lambs, but the very Son of God; He who is not only the Victim presented to God the Father, but the principal Offerer, so that God receives from the oblation an honour proportionate to His infinite greatness. But further, whatever the efficacy of the bloody sacrifices of the Jews, it was wholly derived from our unbloody sacrifice, which theirs foreshadowed. So that between our sacrifice and theirs, the only difference that exists is the difference between the figure and its reality, the shadow and the substance, the prototype and its type.

187. St. John Chrysostom, adverting to this truth, exclaims, "In what rank, tell me, shall we place the Priest who is exalted to the high office of celebrating a sacrifice so awful and so venerable? Are we to leave him among the common herd of men, or to place him amid the angelic choirs? For consider what should be the purity of his life, his devotion, his piety, and the unblemished holiness of his soul? What kind of hands ought those to be which so constantly touch an object of such sacredness? What kind of tongue should that be which utters words so divine?"* It is beyond question that the servants of God, who were full well aware how august is the ministry of this heavenly sacrifice, shrank from approaching it without great purity of conscience, and great fervour and recollection of spirit. St. Francis Borgia, before Mass (which he never failed to celebrate every day) spent several hours with God in prayer and self-examination, in order to cleanse his conscience from all defilement of sin; and in beginning the holy sacrifice, he accompanied the sacred words and rites with a continuous stream of the sweetest tears.† St.

* Cum sacerdos Spiritum Sanctum invocaverit sacrificiumque illud horrore et reverentiâ plenissimum effecerit, communi omnium Domino manibus assidue pertractato, quæro ex te quoto illum in ordine collocabimus? Quantum autem ab illo integritatem exigemus? quantam religionem? Considera enim quales manus illa administrantes esse oporteat? qualem linguam quæ verba illa effundat? quâ denique re non puriorem sanctioremque esse conveniat animam, quæ tantum illum, tamque divinum spiritum receperit. De Sacerdot., lib. vj.

† P. Ribad., In Vitâ, lib. iv., cap. 4, n. 14.

Francis Xavier's face and breast were often bathed with the like devout tears while celebrating, and he burned with such an ardent charity as to be an object of astonishment and devotion to all who beheld him.* Venerable Bede tells us of St. Cuthbert, that he could never celebrate without shedding abundant tears.† The same is related of many other saints. And further, it is recorded of Cardinal Hosius, that the day before celebrating he always cleansed his conscience by a rigorous fast, taking no more than three morsels of bread; and when the morning came he prepared himself by many hours of prayer, during which time, though much important business was pressing upon him, he refused to give audience to a single person.‡ If our reader be one who has been raised to the honour of the Priesthood he may, by the light of this teaching and of these examples, learn what should be the innocency of his life, the blamelessness of his conversation, and the fervour of spirit wherewith he should go up to the altar to perform an action which fills the Seraphim of heaven with holy awe.

188. But if the reader be a layman, let him consider the modest, decent, and reverent demeanour wherewith he should be present at so awful a sacrifice. To such as these, St. John Chrysostom proposes the example of courtiers, who, in the presence of their king, are careful to behave with all possible reverence, in order to pay him homage and to gain his good graces.§ "Therefore," he continues, "they strive, not by the modesty of their looks only, but by their subdued tone of voice, by the manner of holding their hands, by the position taken by their feet, and, in a word, by their whole deportment, to show due observance to the sovereign."‖ "And," he concludes, "we too should thus stand

* Tursellinus, In Vitâ, lib. v., cap. 5.

† Lib. iv., cap. 28.

‡ Stan. Rescius, In Vitâ, lib. iij., cap. 16.

§ Assistit aliquis terreno regi, omnibusque modis molitur, ut quamplurimùm erga illum reverentiam exhibeat, quo per hoc majorem illius erga se conciliet benevolentiam.

‖ Cujus gratiâ non solum specie capitis, verum etiam ipsâ voce, ipsâ manuum compositione, ipsâ pedum conjunctione, totiusque corporis contractione talem reverentiam conantur ostendere.

before the altar, in the presence of the majesty of the Heavenly King, beholding Him with the eye of our mind, and doing Him homage in awe and trembling."*

189. Such was the custom of Sir Thomas More, the great chancellor and illustrious martyr in England. He knew full well how to infer, from the respect which he showed in the presence of his king, how far greater was the reverence he should pay to God when assisting at the holy sacrifice. And with the very same reverence used he to behave when daily hearing the holy Mass, at which time the Lamb without spot is offered to the Eternal Father. It happened one day, that while he was at Mass, he was summoned to the royal presence on some weighty business. Many a courtier at such a message would have turned his back on the altar, and would have hurried to meet his sovereign. But Sir Thomas More did not move from his place. Another summons came, and yet he remained quite absorbed in his attention to the Sacrifice. The third time, the royal messengers began to insist with him that he should leave the altar, and go at once to the royal cabinet, where the king awaited him. The holy man then replied, "Go, tell the king that I am paying homage to a greater Lord than he, and that I must first fulfil this act of reverence and of service."† Whosoever has the same lively faith in the awful mysteries of religion as was possessed by this saintly chancellor, should show the same esteem as he for the sacrifice which is celebrated at holy Mass; and when present thereat, he should, after the example of so great a man, pay it the honour it claims, by the modesty of his outward bearing and by the reverence and devotion of his inmost soul.

190. We have hitherto spoken of sacrifices which are such in the strict acceptation of the term; but, as the Angelic Doctor observes,‡ there are other holy actions which, though not strictly

* Sic oportet nos assistere, talem Deo glorificationem offerentes, metuentes ac trementes, ac tamquam illum ipsum mentis oculis intuentes. In Isaiam, Hom. i.

† Respondit, se meliori Domino obsequium præstare, et perficere opus prius oportere. Stapleton., In Vitâ, cap. 6.

‡ 2, 2, quæst. 85, art. 3, in corp.

speaking sacrifices, partake of the nature of this supreme act, if done in the spirit proper to sacrifice. Because every good action performed from the motive of some other virtue, shares in the species of that virtue, and acquires a fresh charm, which renders it worthy of greater esteem. Thus it is a kind of sacrifice when we give praise to God by the recitation of psalms or of other prayers. And, indeed, this is styled by holy David *a sacrifice of praise*, whether it be given privately, in a low voice in the secrecy of our own chamber, or aloud, by alternate chant in a public assembly: provided only, that while uttering with our tongues the praises of the Almighty, we, at the same time, lift up our hearts to God, and join with the Angels in showing forth His honour. So too, if we mortify our body, and present it as a victim in honour of the Most High, we offer, as St. Paul teaches, a sacrificial act.* To bestow alms, to make an offering to God with the intent of paying Him homage by this act of benevolence, may be called a sacrifice, and indeed it is so styled by the same Apostle.† Nay more; not only does St. Augustine, in conformity with the Apostle, call the mortification of the flesh, by means of a rigid abstinence and of other inflictions, a sacrifice, but he gives the same title to forsaking the world and consecrating ourselves to God; provided such offering be made out of the motive of God's honour and glory.‡ Thus, the reader may see that by acquiring and assiduously practising the virtue of religion, he may add a new lustre to every virtuous action that he performs, may render greater honour to God, and earn for himself more abundant merit.

191. Vows are another act of religion. This is beyond ques-

* Exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem. Ad Rom. xij. 1.

† Beneficentiæ et communionis nolite oblivisci, talibus enim hostiis promeretur Deus. Ad Hebræos xij. 16.

‡ Ipse homo Dei nomini consecratus et Deo devotus, in quantum mundo moritur, ut Deo vivat, sacrificium est. . . . Corpus nostrum, cum per temperantiam castigamus, si hoc quemadmodum debemus, propter Deum facimus, sacrificium est. Ad quod exhortatus Apostolus ait, *Obsecro itaque vos, fratres, per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum.* Si ergo corpus sacrificium est, quanto magis anima cum se refert ad Deum, fit sacrificium? De Civit. Dei, lib. x., cap. 6.

tion, as Isaias affirms it: *And they shall serve Him with sacrifice and oblation, and they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and shall perform it.** The reason is that a vow is a promise made to God of something pleasing to Him; hence it is a promise made in His honour. That the vow may really give honour to God, it must be accompanied by fidelity in keeping to our promises, as the Royal Psalmist warns us;† otherwise, instead of honouring, it outrages God.

192. An Oath is another act of Worship; for by being called on to bear witness to any truth, God is honoured for His infinite wisdom and sovereign truthfulness, which can neither deceive nor be deceived. Hence, certain ancient canons prescribe that the same respect be paid to an oath as was shown to the Blessed Sacrament. And just as out of reverence to the sacred manhood of our Lord, the Holy Eucharist is to be received fasting, so too was it ordered that oaths should be taken fasting, out of respect to the First Truth. But that an oath be honourable to God, it must be about what is true, lawful, praiseworthy and of real importance; for to call on God to bear witness to what is false or sinful, would not be to honour but to dishonour Him. To call on Him to bear witness to truths of but light moment, would be to show deficiency in our esteem of His infinite majesty.

193. There are many other acts of religion, as, for instance, genuflections, bowing the head or body, uncovering the head, clasping the hands, striking the breast, casting the eyes down to the ground, uplifting them to heaven, holding out our arms in the form of a Cross, or prostrating ourselves on the ground. Other acts are adoration of the Cross, veneration of images and relics, and the practice of carrying them about us with due respect. To these we may also add, the founding of churches, the beautifying of them with marbles and pictures, the adornment of altars, and the lavishing silver and gold on their decoration. The ceremonies of the Church are also acts of worship; so likewise are the sacred vestments, the consecrated vessels, psalmody, chanting,

* Colent eum in hostiis, et muneribus, et vota vovebunt Domino, et solvent. Isai. xix. 21.

† Vovete et reddite Domino Deo vestro. Psal. lxxv. 12.

devout music, incense, processions, pilgrimages, and whatever helps us to render homage and service to God as to our Maker and our Everlasing Bliss.

CHAPTER V.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE PRESENT ARTICLE.

194. FIRST suggestion. The Director will have seen before now, how much the saints were addicted to honouring God by the worship of adoration, since not a few of them used to practise it several hundred times a day. The penitent, however, may not have attained that idea of God which suffices to stir him up to such frequent acts of homage and veneration; for which reason the Confessor must at least strive to get him to make acts of adoration as often as he comes before God and Christ Jesus in church, or when in his chamber he enters into converse with God in mental prayer, self-examination, recital of the Breviary, the Rosary, and the like; for if adoration is God's due at other times, on these occasions it is absolutely requisite in order not to be wanting in the respect owing to His Divine Majesty. Who is there, that when calling on a friend, or on being introduced into the presence of a prince, fails at the first meeting to greet him with tokens of suitable reverence, whether by bows, or salutations, by kissing his hands, or garments, or by bending the knee, according to the rank of the person with whom he is about to converse. It is obvious that to omit these and the like civilities, is to fail in due respect. Why, then, in coming into God's presence, should we neglect to show Him at the outset those marks of homage which are His due as the Monarch of the Universe, by bowing down before Him? And how can such a neglect be other than a failing of the reverence owed by us to the Supreme Majesty?

195. I may further add that such adorations are required for the success of our prayers; since, by recalling to mind at the

outset of our devotions the greatness of that God with Whom we are about to converse, and by conceiving sentiments of deep reverence towards Him, the soul gains recollection, the body takes a fitting posture, and the mind becomes fixed on the object made present to it; thus prayer is begun, carried on, and brought to a close, with the proper attention. And, indeed, Holy Church, in setting forth the order of the divine office, prescribes at its outset the recitation of the ninety-fourth psalm: "*Come, let us rejoice before the Lord,*" which throughout breathes adoration and homage to the Majesty of the Most High; and after each stanza is interposed an act of adoration to God, considered either as our Maker, *Let us adore the Lord Who made us*, or as our Sovereign Ruler, *Come let us adore the Lord the King*, of Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, as the case requires. Thus are we sufficiently given to understand, that in beginning any prayer whatsoever, whether mental or vocal, we should collect all our thoughts and affections in the presence of God, and humble our whole selves before Him by an act of the lowliest adoration.

196. Second suggestion. As regards the adoration which consists in exterior acts of the body, the Director will be cautious to prevent his penitents, while praying in church, from doing anything which is not practised in such places by the mass of the faithful: because to break forth in public into acts which are singular, however devout, may easily lead to vanity and self-complacency in the person that performs them, and may readily provoke the remarks and railings of the bystanders. I except the case wherein the Confessor might judge fit to allow such acts, as a mortification, to some one who feels an extreme repugnance for them; which permission, however, should never be given without due consideration. If the penitent pray in the privacy of his closet, he must be advised to do whatever is most calculated to stir up within him reverence, respect and awe, in the presence of Him Whom he is then addressing: for, as St. Augustine says, one of the motives for performing these outward actions is by their aid to awaken such sentiments of pious veneration. But in order to proceed in this matter without risk,

I will now explain what are the acts of outward worship, which have ever been laudably practised among the faithful, so that we are assured that they constitute a true worship.

197. It is an act of worship to pray when kneeling down, or when standing upright. Baronius informs us* that both methods have ever been in use in the Church, and he alleges the authority of Tertullian.† He alludes also to the custom of the Church, which prescribes kneeling at prayer for six days in the week and standing on the seventh—that is, Sunday—in memory of our Lord's Resurrection. But, as to pray on our knees is a posture more becoming the condition of a sinner, and better suited to move God to mercy, it should be the most frequently adopted. Ribadeneira relates of St. Ignatius,‡ that he was accustomed to go up to the roof of the house, and there he engaged himself in prayer, sometimes standing with eyes fixed on heaven, and sometimes prostrate on the ground.

198. It is also an act of external worship to pray with joined hands. We read in the Book of Exodus,§ that while the hosts of Israel were fighting against the Amalekites, Moses stood on the summit of a high hill praying to obtain the victory of God; and that, during his prayer, he kept his hands uplifted—that is, as à Lapide explains it, clasped together, so that the palm of one hand met the other.‖ And so pleasing to God was the prayer of Moses, being accompanied by this outward act of veneration and worship, that when he lowered his hands, from being unable to keep them uplifted any longer from sheer fatigue, the Israelites began to have the worst of the fight;¶ so that it was necessary for Aaron and Hur, on either side of the Prophet, to assist him in holding his arms extended until the sun went down, in order

* Annal. Eccl., A.D. 58.

† Quod ad habitum corporis in fundendis precibus spectat, stantes aliquando, aliquando vero genibus flexis Christianos adorare debere, verissima est in Ecclesia institutio, ut tradit Tertullianus.

‡ In Vitâ, lib. v., cap. i.

§ Exod. xvij. 11.

‖ Videtur autem Moyses, levâsse et extendisse manus junctas, ita ut vola una alteram, quâ virgam tenebat, complecteretur.

¶ Cumque levaret Moyses, vincebat Israel: sin autem paullulum remisisset, superabat Amalec. Ibid.

that he might enable his people to gain a complete victory over the Amalekites by continuing his prayer in this devout posture.

199. Baronius* quotes a letter of Pope St. Nicolas, in which he replies to the Bulgarians, who had consulted him concerning this manner of praying with hands joined. The Pontiff approves the practice, as expressive of humility and heartfelt subjection to the divine presence; and he adds that, as we read in the Gospels concerning the reprobate, how their hands and feet shall be bound, and how thus they shall be cast into the gloomy dungeon of hell, so he who keeps his hands clasped together before God seems to say, "Lord, of mine own free will have I bound my hands; thus do I declare myself a guilty creature, deserving of every chastisement: cast me not, therefore, so bound, into the torments of the bottomless pit."†

200. Another act of the same description, is to pray with hands uplifted, or stretched out in the form of a Cross. In this manner King Solomon poured forth his prayer at the dedication of the Temple.‡ The early Christians, following an Apostolic tradition, prayed constantly, as Baronius affirms, in this manner; and St. Paul makes allusion to the custom when he says, *I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands.*§ St. Paul, the First Hermit, fulfilled this counsel to perfection, for St. Jerome writes that he died on his knees with his hands outstretched, and that his corpse maintained this posture after death.

201. Another act of worship is to pray prostrate on the ground, as did Judas Machabeus and his companions in order to obtain of God the victory over Timothy, who was marching against them at the head of a large army. As the foe was approaching, they prayed prostrate on the earth at the foot of the Altar,‖ with ashes

* In A.D. 58.

† Domine, ne manus meas ligari præcipias, ut mittar in tenebras exteriores; quoniam ecce ego jam eas ligavi, et ecce in flagella paratus sum, juxta illud Pauli, si nosmetipsos dijudicaremus, non utique judicaremur.

‡ Surrexit de conspectu altaris Domini, utrumque enim genu in terram fixerat, et manus expanderat in cœlum. III. Regum viij. 54.

§ Volo ergo viros orare in omni loco, levantes manus puras. I. ad Tim. ij. 8.

‖ Machabæus autem et qui cum eo erant, appropinquante illo, deprecaban-

upon their heads, and with hair-cloths about their loins. In the same manner did a Christian legion under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus pray prostrate on the ground, and so obtained for the Roman army a glorious victory, and for the foe an ignominious defeat; as the same Emperor witnessed in his report to the Senate. But the most memorable example of this mode of prayer is that given to us by our dear Redeemer, of Whom we read in the holy Gospel that as He prayed to His eternal Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, He fell prostrate upon the ground.*

202. Another act of worship is to strike the breast in prayer, as did the publican.† And Pope St. Nicolas I., in his letter to the Bulgarians, quoted above, gives the following interpretation of this act: "By striking our breasts, we give token of our sorrow for having transgressed, and of our resolve to inflict punishment on ourselves, before God comes at the last day to take vengeance upon us."‡ St. Jerome was much given to this practice, as he tells that he frequently spent whole days and nights bruising his breast with hard blows.§

203. Another act of worship is devoutly to lift up the eyes to heaven after the example of our blessed Saviour,‖ of Whom we read in St. John, that lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said: *Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me:* and Who, on another occasion, as we read in the same Gospel, raised His eyes to heaven and cried out: *Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son.*¶ It is also an act of worship to keep the eyes down-

tur Dominum, caput terrâ aspergentes, lumbosque ciliciis præcincti, ad altaris crepidinem provoluti. II. Machab. x. 25.

* Et progressus pusillum, procidit in faciem suam, orans. Matth. xxvi. 39.

† Percutiebat pectus suum dicens, propitius esto mihi peccatori. Luc. xviij. 13.

‡ Significantes videlicet, quod nequiter gessimus displicere nobis, et ideo antequam Dominus feriat, et antequam ultio extrema veniat, commissum pœnitentiâ dignâ punire. Baron. ut supra.

§ Memini me clamantem diem junxisse cum noctibus, nec prius a pectoris cessare verberibus, quam rediret, Domino increpante, tranquillitas. Epist. 22 ad Eustochium.

‖ Elevatis sursum oculis, dixit: Pater, gratias ago tibi, quoniam audisti me. Joan. xj. 14.

¶ Et sublevatis oculis in cœlum, dixit: Pater, venit hora, clarifica filium tuum. Joan. xvij. 1.

cast in token of lowly subjection, imitating the publican in his devout prayer.* The Director may now see what are those acts of outward worship, which may, without risk of superstition or vain affectation, be profitably practised at times of prayer, as being authorised by the examples of the saints and the use of Holy Church. He must also observe to which of these holy and religious acts his penitents show most inclination, and which serve the most to awaken within them feelings of homage, awe, reverence, submission and compunction; and he must prescribe the frequent practice of these whenever his penitents pray in their chambers, or in private places, where they can give full vent to their feelings without being remarked; for, by means of a frequent repetition of these inward and outward acts, they will give great honour to God, and speedily acquire the virtue of religion.

294. In the first ages of the Church, the faithful were in the habit of praying with their faces to the East, as may be gathered from St. Justin, Origen, and St. John Damascene. And we read of St. Antony, that being accustomed to spend the whole night in prayer, he complained when the sun's dazzling rays disturbed at dawn of day the sweet calm of his contemplations. St. Justin gives as the reason for this posture in prayer, that as we are unable in praying to turn at once to all the four corners of the world, we look towards the East, not because God dwells there exclusively, but as to that place which He has appointed for our prayers.† The Saint further adds that this custom was handed down by the Apostles.‡ This way of praying seems to have fallen into disuse; but I have, nevertheless, mentioned it, that the Director meeting with some who find in such a posture a help to their devotion, may not look upon it as a vain observance,

* Et publicanus a longe stans, nolebat nec oculos in cœlum levare. Luc. xviij. 13.

† Cum sit impossibile, precum tempore in quatuor creaturæ partes respicere, propterea in unam partem intendentes, orationem peragimus, non proinde ut eâ solâ opus sit Dei, nec tamquam in eâ habitatio sit Dei destinata; sed quasi in locum ei, quæ a nobis Deo exhibetur, venerandæ observationi destinatum. Lib. QQ., quæst. 118.

‡ Porro a quibus orationem Ecclesia accepit, ab iisdem quoque ubi orare soleret, consuetudinem accepit: a sanctis nimirum Apostolis.

not being aware that it is a practice of long standing in the Church.

205. Third suggestion. With regard to the care of Churches and reverence for the Sacrifice there celebrated, the Director must pay particular attention to those women who, at first sight, seem to be the most given to venerate these holy places, but yet are not unfrequently found to be the most irreverent. They frequent the Churches, spend many hours there, hear many Masses, in a word, seem to be spiritual, devout, and full of religion and of awe in God's presence. But if their behaviour be closely scrutinised, it will be discovered that many of them are drawn to Church, not out of love for God's service, but by their aversion to retirement. They come to the House of God to find that matter for curiosity which they cannot get in their own house. They set themselves when there to examine the vain styles of dress with which the women of the country adorn themselves; all the varieties of fortune and fashion and ornament; and they grow envious and spiteful when they see themselves distanced in vanity and finery. They gossip there with their acquaintances and neighbours, talk over the various items of news, converse about their domestic affairs, complain of their troubles, and forbear not from committing such irreverences even while the awful Sacrifice is being celebrated at the Altar.

206. Such women most assuredly do not go to Church to worship God so much as to dishonour Him; hence they deserve to be rebuked. Their Director ought, therefore, to order them rather to stay in doors, than to come to the House of God with such unbecoming dispositions; for by a single recital of the Rosary at home, with due reverence and attention, they will give more honour to God, and do something more acceptable to Him, than by hearing many Masses in the Church, and saying a number of prayers there, accompanied with countless irreverences by gazing about them, by gossiping, and by all kinds of curiosity. He should thunder in their ears the words which St. John Chrysostom so often repeated to his people, "Let us stand, Sister, in Church with downcast eyes, humble and awe-stricken, without words on our lips, but with moaning or jubilation in the heart, as befits the mysteries

which are celebrated in the holy place.* Do you not know, Sister, that they who stand in the presence of earthly kings, all frail and mortal as these are, are motionless and silent, and cast not their eyes hither and thither, but maintain a serious mien? Profit by their example, and behave in God's presence as respectfully, at all events, as you would before an earthly monarch, even if you are not able to show the sacred awe befitting the majesty of the King of Heaven."† The same Saint then adds: "I often tell you this, and shall go on repeating it till I see some amendment."‡ The Director, if he has any care for God's honour, will do the like with his penitents. Cesarius records of St. Ambrose,§ that when celebrating Mass, he used after the Gospel to warn the people not only not to laugh and talk, but not to cough or clear their throats noisily; in a word, to forbear from whatever might disturb the devout silence of the Sacrifice. The Director should do in private what this holy Archbishop shrank not from doing publicly.

207. But there is a still lower deep. We meet with women whose irreverence is such that they go to Church, not to hear Mass, or to join in the sacred services which are there performed, but to be seen, and to make parade of their charms. They would be ashamed to stand in the public streets in order to show their beauty, their dress and ornaments, to the passers-by, and yet they turn the Church into a public place; indeed, they behave in it as they would in a theatre. Such as these approach not the Altar to worship the Divine Majesty, but rather to be themselves an object of idolatrous worship;—and far from showing respect to the holy place which God has chosen as His abode, they positively rob Him of His honour, by withdrawing the eyes, thoughts

* Stemus trementes, et timidi, demissis oculis, renatâ autem animâ gementes sine voce, jubilantes corde.

† An non vides eos, qui sensibili, corruptibili, temporali, et terreno reg assistunt, quam sint immobiles, non loquentes, non oculos huc et illuc mittentes; sed mæsti, territi, lugentes? Ex his documentum accipite, homines, et sic assistite Deo, quasi terrenum regem accessuri. Multo magis cœlest regi cum timore adstare oportet.

‡ Hoc sæpe dico, et dicere non cessabo, donec correctos videam. Serm. de Evang. In Encæniis.

§ Lib. 1, Mirac., cap. 30.

and hearts of the bystanders from the sacred functions. The Director may humble the irreverent pride of such by the example of a queen, as much their superior in birth as surpassing them in her lowly reverence for the holy place in times of divine service: I mean St. Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary.* She went to Church suitably dressed, as became her rank. As the holy Sacrifice proceeded, the thought of her natural vileness, and of the unspeakable excellence of the Sacrament, inspired her with such humility, that she began to remove her several ornaments one by one, and in the course of the Mass, took off the diamonds from her stomacher, the bracelets from her wrists, the jewels from her head-dress; and thus towards the close of the service was no less abject in her outward appearance than humble of heart in God's sight. And by this conduct she gave a lesson to all women not to load themselves with finery, and to put off their vanities when they are to appear in Church, in the presence of that God Who so humbles Himself for their sake in the Blessed Sacrament.

208. Fourth suggestion. There are some persons who are no less ready to take Vows, than negligent in keeping them. In some moment of extraordinary fervour, or in some urgent necessity, they are too ready to bind themselves before God to this or that. But they are no less ready to forget or to violate the obligations which they have contracted. Such as these should be taught that a vow is a great and important religious act, which gives much honour to God if it be duly performed; as the Psalmist says in the words already quoted, *Vow and pay unto the Lord your God;* but if the vow be neglected or broken, it does God a dishonour which has the malice of sacrilege: wherefore it is right to be prudent and circumspect in making vows, and still more diligent and exact in fulfilment. The Director will therefore tell these people never to bind themselves by any vow without previously taking counsel of himself, or of some other prudent person. The same holds good of Oaths, to take which under the fitting conditions is a religious act, but failing this, it is an outrage to the First Truth, and calls for condign punishment. St. Gregory of Tours relates† that two

* Theodoricus Turinghus. In Vitâ, cap. 11.
† Lib. de Glor. Martyr., cap. 53.

persons having disagreed about a certain matter, determined to settle the point in dispute by an oath. They went therefore to the Church of the holy Martyr, St. Martin, and, falling on their knees, the one who was seeking to win the suit by perjury, stretched forth his hand towards the tomb of the Saint, and opened his mouth to utter the false oath. While he was in the very act of giving utterance to the sacrilegious words, his tongue was paralysed within his mouth, and his whole body grew as rigid as a block of marble. The same historian relates several other instances of the awful judgments wherewith God has visited those who dared, by false swearing, to outrage His holy Name. Hence, the Director will be careful to weed out of the mouths of his penitents every description of oath, according to the maxims of Christ.* When however, necessity, truth, and God's service require that an oath should be taken, he must provide that it be done with the reverence and awe which becomes God's holy Name.

ARTICLE VI.

On Devotion.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE OF DEVOTION.

209. It is well worthy to be wondered at that so few among the faithful form a just idea of Devotion, when the very word itself gives a clue to its meaning. Devotion is derived from the verb to *devote*, from dedicating one's self with readiness and

* Ego autem dico vobis, non jurare omnino, neque per cœlum, quia thronus Dei est: neque per terram, quia scabellum est pedum ejus: neque per Jerosolymam, quia civitas est magni regis. Neque per caput tuum juraveris: quia non potes unum capillum album facere, aut nigrum. Sit autem sermo vester, est, est; non, non: quod autem his abundantius est, a malo est.

promptitude to the service of another. Thus a prince may call "devoted" a loyal subject who is ever ready to render him all manner of service. A person is said to be devoted to a royal house, when, for the esteem and love he bears it, he is disposed to serve its members in all possible ways. And when we declare to a friend or any other person our devotedness, we have no other meaning than that we are ready to serve and to honour him. Hence we should banish from our mind any false notion we may have hitherto entertained concerning the devotion wherewith God is honoured, and we should remain convinced with the Angelic Doctor that devotion is nothing but a ready willingness to do whatever belongs to the service of God.*

210. The Sacred Scriptures afford authentic proof of this doctrine in not a few passages, some of which I will quote. In the Book of Exodus we read that when Moses was about to construct the Tabernacle, and to make the vessels and divers appliances needed for the decent worship of God, he called on the people to offer to the Almighty, gold, silver and brass; blue, purple and scarlet; fine linen and precious stones; spices, sweet incense and whatever else God had made known that He was willing to receive for His own glory. The inspired text tells us, that on this simple appeal of their chief and leader, the children of Israel made these offerings with great devotion, and that all the people, with willing heart, brought their gifts to the Lord for the work of the Tabernacle of the Testimony;† as if to imply that to do God a service with a ready will is the same as to do it with devotion. Again, in one of the books of Paralipomena, we read that the multitude of the people offered to God victims, hymns of praise, and whole burnt-offerings, with a devout heart.‡ Now their devotion consisted in the ready willingness wherewith they made these offerings to God. Thus too when Ezechias raised his voice during the sacrifice in the Temple, saying, *Come near and bring*

* Voluntas prompte tradendi se ad ea quæ pertinet ad Dei famulatum. 2, 2, qu. 28, art. 1.

† Obtulerunt mente promptissimâ atque devotâ primitia Domino, ad faciendum opus tabernaculi testimonii. Exod. xxxv. 21.

‡ Obtulit ergo universa multitudo hostias et laudes et holocausta, mente devotâ. II. Paralip. xxix. 31.

sacrifices and thank-offerings into the house of the Lord,* the thing was done without delay,† for the people, on hearing the king's appeal, brought in six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.‡ And in this readiness of will to supply an offering so costly, and which must have tended so much to God's honour, consists the devotion for which they are praised in the sacred text.

211. Every one knows with what devotion the holy king David celebrated God's praises, and extolled Him by sacred canticles. But if any be curious to know further wherein his devotion precisely consisted, he may learn it from the Psalmist's own lips, *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; I will sing and give praise.*§ In another passage, setting forth his devotion to God as shown by perfect service and observance of all the divine commandments, the Royal Prophet says: *I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.*‖ And in sundry passages he employs the like words, to show that his devotion consisted in the ready will which he exhibited in whatever concerned the service of his Lord.

212. But the most illustrious instance of devotion recorded in the inspired pages is, beyond dispute, that of St. Paul near Damascus, when he was approaching the gates of that city. In proportion to his devotion to the Law of Moses, was his enmity to the law of Christ, and his hostility to all Christians. Determined to abolish by violence, because unable to do so by argument, a religion so hateful to him, he went to the High-priest, and obtained from him a commission to seize all the followers of the precepts of the New Law on whom he could lay hands, and to drag them bound in chains to the prisons of Jerusalem, where they might be obliged to renounce either their religion or their life. Equipped then with arms, as well as bearing this commission, he set out with a menacing countenance, and a cruel heart,

* Accedite, et offerte victimas, et laudes in domo Domini.

† De repente quippe hoc fieri placuerat.

‡ Sanctificaveruntque Domino boves sexcentos, et oves tria millia.

§ Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum : cantabo, et psalmum dicam. Psal. lvj. 8.

‖ Paratus sum, et non sum turbatus, ut custodiam mandata tua. Psal. cxviij. 60.

breathing dungeons, bloodshed, tortures, and death.* But what happened? As he was nearing Damascus, the Saviour sent a light from heaven to encompass him, struck him to the earth by a single word, and conquered him with sweet expostulation.† At the shining of this light, the sound of this voice, the echo of this complaint, hate was changed into love, scorn into homage, and he forthwith replied: "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do* for Thine honour and glory? Say but the word, I am ready for everything."‡ Cornelius à Lapide, commenting on this passage of the Acts of the Apostles, says, that the humble promptitude and alacrity with which St. Paul offered himself wholly to the Saviour's service, was an act of devotion so acceptable to Christ, that he merited thereby, not, indeed, with merit *de condigno*, but with merit *de congruo*, that God should raise him to the dignity of the Apostolate, and change him from the fierce persecutor he had been into the illustrious Doctor of the Gentiles.§

213. St. Thomas‖ gathers from the doctrine above laid down, that devotion is not any particular species of virtue, but belongs to the virtue of religion; for, as we have shown, the acts of religion are those which are concerned with the due worship and service of God; and devotion adds to these acts nothing more than a certain promptitude of execution. Now, as this quality in nowise changes the objects of these acts, it does not vary their species, but only increases their lustre and perfection. Thus, for instance, an offering made to God with a ready and willing heart, is not of a species different from an oblation made with only half a will and with but little fervour: all that can be said is that the

* Saulus adhuc spirans minarum et cædis in discipulos Domini, accessit ad principem sacerdotum, et petiit ab eo epistolas in Damascum ad synagogas, ut si quos invenisset hujus viæ viros, ac mulieres, vinctos perduceret in Jerusalem. Act. ix. 1.

† Saule, Saule, quid me persequeris?

‡ Domine, quid me vis facere?

§ *Domine, quid me vis facere?* Hâc enim submissione, resignatione, devotione, promptitudine, alacritate animi ad omnia parati, totumque se Deo offerentis, disposuit, et meruit de congruo evehi ad apostolatûs apicem, fierique doctor gentium. In Text. Cit.

‖ 2, 2, quæst. 82, art. 2.

former offering will be more devout, and more perfect, and far more acceptable to God. So that in the present Article we shall still continue to discourse of religion, but so far forth only, as it receives greater lustre and beauty from devotion.

CHAPTER II.

THE SOURCES OF DEVOTION.

214. THE Angelic Doctor* distinguishes a twofold source whence the sweet nectar of devotion wells forth: one of these he terms extrinsic, and it is none other but God Himself, Who by His heavenly light and sweet inspirations, stirs up the soul and excites it to the willing performance of what concerns His service. And indeed, St. Ambrose observes, that, had God so chosen, He might have given devotion to the very Samaritans (indevout and averse to His service as they were), since He can call whom He pleases and make them devout in the fulfilment of the duties of religion.† But it is needless to enlarge on this point, as all must be fully aware that our every good deed, especially when appertaining to a sphere so far above the efforts of our frail nature—I mean that of supernatural grace and merit—has God for its chief author.

215. The other source, termed intrinsic by the holy Doctor, consists in these two things, in the love of God enkindled by the consideration of His excellence and beneficence, and in the heartfelt humility which springs from the realisation of our own misery. These may be likened to two spurs which drive our soul to God, and stir us up to undertake with a willing readiness whatever may tend to His honour and service. Hugh of St. Victor takes the same view: "Devotion is a ready turning of the soul towards God, by means of a tender and humble affec-

* Qu. cit. art. 3.

† Si voluisset, Samaritanos ex indevotis devotos fecisset: Deus quos dignatur vocat, et quem vult religiosum facit. In Cap. iv. Lucæ.

tion; humble, on account of the experience of our own frailty; tender, from the consideration of God's goodness."* Such are the two wings which quickly raise the soul to God by means of devout affections. To proceed, however, with due order, we must needs distinguish between the contemplation of the divine goodness and the love it kindles; between the consideration of our own misery and the sentiment of humility and self-abasement which it begets within us: next, we must establish the two following truths. First, that these sentiments of love and humility are the immediate causes which give to the will the final impulse which makes it set about the work of God's service with readiness and promptitude;† such are the words of the Angelic Doctor. Secondly, that the mediation of God's benefits, and of our own vileness, are the remote causes of this devout impulse; since they act not on the will directly and of themselves, though by means of the affections which they excite within us. It is useful to enter into these details, for, by laying bare the roots whence springs the delicious fruit of devotion, we shall learn how to make it our own.

216. That the love of God is the immediate source of devotion to Him, is as obvious as that every one is ready to do service to one whom he loves. This is rendered evident by the case of those who are enamoured of human charms. What services will they shrink from rendering to the beloved object, what compliance, what presents, what marks of respect and submission? They are ever attentive to the slightest want of the object of their passion; they are anxious to please, to guess every wish, to strive to anticipate every desire. What is it that makes so heavy a yoke light to them? What indeed but love? Now, if the beauty of dust and ashes can so enslave the human heart, how much more will not the love of One Who is infinitely lovely in Himself, and infinitely good to us, when kindled within our breasts, render us ready to endure and to dare all in His service and for His glory?

* Devotio est conversio in Deum pio et humili affectu; humilis est ex conscientiâ infirmitatis propriæ, pius est ex consideratione divinæ clementiæ. Lib. de Modo Orandi, cap. 1.

† Consideratio excitat dilectionem, quæ est proxima devotionis causa.

See the cannon-ball as it starts from the cannon's mouth;—it flies quicker than the wind, and dashes, as it seems in a single instant, against the mark however distant it may be. What can have imparted such velocity to this dead-weight of brass or iron? What, but the fire which propelled it from the bosom of the metal? Think, too, of the thunderbolt which flashes from the clouds, shattering the loftiest towers or reducing whole forests to ashes, how rapidly it speeds its flight, almost with the same velocity as the lightning-flash, which accompanies it, reaching in a single instant the place where it overwhelms with terror. But what gave it this great speed? Was it not the flame that set it free from the cloud wherein it lurked? How much more, then, will not the love of God,—which is a flame far more lively, a fire far more fierce,* if it be but well kindled in our bosoms,—render easy to us, and make us prompt and ready for, whatever concerns God's honour and service, in other words, render us devout in all holy actions? Not material fire only, but also the divine flame of charity, has the property of being active; and hence can impart its own activity to the soul, and enable it to overcome every obstacle to the service of the beloved. Every love, as St. Augustine says, has a certain force to urge the lover to work for the benefit of his beloved, nor can this force remain idle in the heart.† Hence St. Gregory infers that divine love must, of its innate efficacy, do great things for God, if it really exists; and if it refuses to work for Him, there is no love in the heart.‡ So true is it that there is nothing which has more power than love of God to engender within us this promptitude in all the works that belong to God's service: this alacrity which is the very life-blood of all true devotion.

217. There never was any woman more devoted to our Saviour than St. Mary Magdalen, with the exception of His own most Blessed Mother; for we can find none so ready to do Him every kind of

* Deus ignis consumens est.

† Habet omnis amor vim suam, nec potest vacare in animo amantis. In Psal. cxxj.

‡ Operatur magna, si est; si autem renuit operari, amor non est. Hom. 30 in Evang.

service when occasion offered. She hears that He had gone to the house of the Pharisee, to take dinner with him; she rushes in, as St. Augustine observes, regardless of the opinion of all the guests,* to pay homage to Jesus in the sight of all; and, without the least fear of blame from the supercilious and rigidly virtuous host, or of the disapproval of the company, she hastens to anoint His head with a precious balsam, imprints countless kisses on His feet, and bathes them with that yet more precious balsam which distilled from her own heart, I mean with her tears; and then, in place of a towel, she used her golden tresses to wipe those sacred feet which she had moistened with her weeping. The Saviour Himself, as if stricken with admiration, complained of the Pharisee, who, while inviting Him to his house, had forborne to show Him the like tokens of homage. She next entertains Him gladly in her own house, and while he tarries there, cannot bear to lose sight of Him for a single moment, but clings in lowly reverence to His feet.

218. She hears that the hate of the Scribes and Pharisees and the fury of the mob have at length prevailed, and that her Lord is doomed to die. Stricken to the heart by this news, she goes forth with sorrow on her countenance, her hair dishevelled, and, hurrying through the streets of Jerusalem, she bursts through the dense crowds, to rejoin Him; then, while all His dearest friends betray, deny, or forsake Him, she faithfully accompanies Him to Calvary, and heedless of the fierce frowns of the executioners, the threats of the soldiers, the taunts of the Pharisees, she stands to the last by the Cross of Jesus, and imparts to Him, in His dying moments, the only solace that One so afflicted could receive: she gives Him the comfort of heartfelt compassion,—tears, sobs, and mournful sighs. And when at last her Saviour expired, she found no rest; she could not be idle; she would at least do honour to His lifeless Body, by the spices and perfumes which she provided for Its burial. At the first dawn of day she hastened to the tomb, and finding it empty of the bloodless remains of her Beloved, she seemed to upbraid the inanimate rock for having allowed its treasure to be taken away; she bedewed it with her scalding

* Irruit quasi importuna convivio. Hom. 50, Homil. 23.

tears, and when all others left it, she had not the heart to tear herself away. At length in seeing the living form of Him Whom her soul loved, under the semblance of a gardener, she hastened to throw herself at his feet, stretching forth her hands to embrace them, and to clasp them to her bosom. But, may I ask, whence did Magdalen acquire so ready, so prompt a willingness to render every possible service to her Divine Master, to show him every delicate attention, even so as to surpass the devotion of the other holy women, and the devotion of the Apostles themselves, who were so deeply attached to the Redeemer? Let St. Gregory answer the question for me. Magdalen, the sinner, was cold, slothful, indifferent about showing any honour to the Word made Flesh; but her soul passing from sin to love, she was wholly inflamed with the ardour of her affection.* This sacred flame it was which made her hasten to do homage and service to Jesus; this it was that spurred her on, and rendered her swift and prompt in whatever concerned His honour. For, as St. Augustine says, "then only are we slothful and careless in our actions, when our love waxes cold."† But if our love be fervent and lively, it cannot brook inactivity; it spurs the heart and hands to do whatever tends to the honour and advantage of our Beloved One.‡ And the great love of Mary Magdalen was, as Christ Himself bore witness, the reason that she was so earnest in doing much for Him. Whoever, therefore, desires to be very devout, must love his God very much, and thus he will be what he desires to be. I mean he will become ready and willing in whatever interests the service and the glory of God.

219. The second source, and immediate cause of devotion, is humility of heart. St. Bonaventure also takes the view, that the promptitude in God's service which we term devotion, is immediately engendered in the will, as by its proximate causes, by the love of God and inward humility of spirit. The sentiment of the love of God, says the Seraphic Doctor, and that of a godly fear,

* Quæ prius frigida peccando remanserat, postmodum amando fortiter ardebat. Homil. 35 in Evang.

† Si refrigescit amor noster, refrigescit actio nostra. In Psal. lxxxv.

‡ Dilectio vacare non potest, nisi quidquid potest boni operetur. In Psal. xxxi.

humble yet full of trust, beget in the will the fervour and alacrity for good which should never be extinguished in the heart of a servant of God; for herein does devotion mainly consist.* Meaning, of course, that it consists formally in one of these things, while it consists in the others as in the causes by which it is produced.

220. The reason why inward humility begets devotion within us, is thus explained by St. Thomas: "The feeling of self-abasement resulting from the consideration of our own failings hinders man from relying on his own virtues, and renders him subject to God as to the source of every best gift; thus it keeps us from that presumption which banishes God from the soul, depriving it of His help, and hence rendering it lukewarm in His love, and in its earnestness for good."† I will illustrate this doctrine of the Saint by an extract from Palladius, which contains an instance no less terrible than suitable to my present purpose.‡

221. A person of illustrious birth having forsaken the pomps of the world, withdrew into a desert, built himself a low and narrow cell, and there gave himself up wholly to the service of God. He speedily rose to such heights of devotion, that his whole life was one continuous act of praise, and of constant communion with God in prayer. His only care was to serve the Lord by rigid abstinence, lengthened fastings, sleepless watchings, and unceasing mortification of his body. In course of time, as he deemed that he had made great spiritual progress, he began to conceive a high opinion of himself, to glance with complacency at his own virtues, and to rely on his own strength which, by this time, seemed to him to be equal to any emergency. He even came to fancy that there was no longer any danger of falling from the perfection he had attained, and to consider his salvation as certain; in a word, he had fallen into a state of vain reliance upon

* Affectus amoris Dei, et sancti timoris cum fervore bonæ voluntatis, in spiritu humilitatis, et motu pietatis, et gaudio spei, nunquam debet in corde servi Dei extingui: ista namque sunt, in quibus virtus devotionis maxime consistit. Tom. iii. In 3 Process. Relig.

† Hæc consideratio (nempe suorum defectuum) excludit præsumptionem, per quam aliquis impeditur, ne Deo se subjiciat, dum suæ virtuti innititur. 2, 2, qu. 92, art. 2,

‡ Hist. Lausiac, cap. 44.

himself. But God, Who protects the souls that in humble subjection cast themselves upon Him, and forsakes such as will not acknowledge their weakness and their own nothingness, relying vainly on themselves, allowed the devil to assail him with a violent temptation, which might give him proof of his own weakness. Availing himself of the divine permission, the enemy laid a trap worthy of his craft, no less cunning than malignant. He put on the appearance of a charming woman, and in the darkest hour of night, feigning to have lost his way in this solitude, came to knock at the door of the Hermit's cell, asking, in piteous tones, for shelter. The Hermit, being fully confident of his virtue, made no difficulty about receiving her. The pretended woman entered, and by working inwardly on the heart of this poor wretch by suggestions, and outwardly by the attractiveness of beauty, gave him so grievous a shock, that he yielded to the temptation and consented to a desire of shameful sin. But while he was on the point of carrying out his thought into act, the woman vanished from him like smoke, and he heard the air re-echo with the shouts and mocking laughter of the fiends, who made sport of him, and said in exultation over his fall: "*He who exalteth himself shall be humbled.* In thought, you had climbed up to the very stars, lo! you are now fallen into the abyss." The worst was, that after this fall he did not find his way back to repentance and to God; for the same presumption which had caused his ruin, hurled him over the precipice of complete despair. That happened to the unfortunate man which happens when the ground sinks beneath our feet; the support failing on which the whole body rests, we cannot but be cast into the abyss. Further, discovering, by the unhappy issue of the temptation, the weakness of that virtue by which he had set so much store, he lost all hope of salvation, quitted his solitude and cell, forsook his God, and returning to the world, plunged into countless abominations. St. Thomas was right then in saying that to preserve and increase devotion, we must needs hold ourselves in full subjection to God, by means of a humble esteem of ourselves, such as may banish presumption, that vice so hateful to God, so incompatible with His grace and love, and so great a hindrance to all sentiment of devotion.

222. Lastly, the mediate cause, which produces devotion in the will—not indeed of itself, but by means of the above-mentioned emotions of love—is the consideration frequently renewed of such truths as are suited to excite these affections. However hideous and terrible a monster may be, it will never inspire fear or disgust unless it be seen. Thus, too, man may of himself be an abyss of misery, yet never will he attain so low an opinion of his condition, never conceive in his heart that humble sentiment which will make him bend down before God as the source of all good, unless he set himself to consider with the eye of his mind his native nothingness, his incapacity for any good, his frailty which betrays him into every evil, his sins, his shortcomings, and his imperfections. On the other hand, however capable an object may be to charm every eye, to ravish every heart, by its beauty, still it will never excite affection in the hearts of those who do not see it; nay, who do not gaze on it at repeated intervals, so as to give scope to their admiration. Thus in God there is infinite beauty, and sovereign goodness; yet though His benefits be infinite both in greatness and number, they fail to enkindle divine love within us, if they be not frequently pondered by us. So that to gain the affections necessary for the devout performance of what concerns God's service—to gain, in other words, a cheerful alacrity—the exercise of meditation is requisite, especially on the mysteries of the Passion of our most loving Saviour. Because, as St. Bernard witnesses, nothing can so powerfully constrain our hearts as the thought of loving the Supreme Good. Nothing does more to awaken in the soul a true and solid devotion. "Dear Jesus, what renders Thee most amiable to us, is that bitter cup of which Thou didst drink, by which the wondrous work of our redemption was wrought. This it is assuredly which wins all our love; this most justly claims, most sweetly attracts, most powerfully urges, and most vehemently ravishes our heart's devotion."* And he adds the reason, "In

* Super omnia reddit amabilem te mihi, Jesu bone, calix quem bibisti, opus nostræ redemptionis. Hoc omnino amorem nostrum facile vindicat totum sibi. Hoc est, quod nostram devotionem et blandius allicit, et justius exigit, et acrius stringit, et afficit vehementius. In Cant.-Serm. 20.

no one thing has God laboured so much on our behalf as in His most dolorous Passion. He has indeed created the world for our sakes, but the production of this vast universe cost Him only a word. In His Passion, on the contrary, He had to put up with gainsayings to His words, blame of His doings, outrage and rebukes in His death. *Behold how He loved us.* He loved sweetly, wisely, and mightily. Learn then, Christian soul, from Christ Himself, how Christ is to be loved—sweetly, without allowing thyself to be deluded; prudently, without letting thyself be drawn astray; mightily, so as not to be overcome by things of earth."* And of a truth, nothing can so stimulate our hearts to render love for love; and hence this should be the most ordinary subject-matter of our meditations.

223. Now, to resume briefly what has been fully declared in this Chapter, it may be said that the causes which proximately and immediately beget devotion in such actions and works as concern the divine service and honour, are the soul's love of Him, and a spirit of subjection to God. The less immediate causes which produce devotion through the medium of love, and bring the interior into subjection to God, are meditations or courses of reflection, directed to this end. If, therefore, any one wishes to become very devout to our Lord through the kindling within his heart of this love, he must give himself to frequent and attentive meditation, as did the saints, who spent many hours of the day in this profitable exercise, passed whole nights therein, and were so deeply engaged in the consideration of supernatural and heavenly truths, that nothing whatever had power to draw away their thoughts, neither men nor demons, nor even the fiercest brutes. This is shown in the instance related by St. Linus of a monk who, while meditating on the heavenly mysteries, was

* Multum quippe laboravit in eo Salvator; nec in omni mundi fabricâ tantum fatigationis auctor assumpsit. Ille denique *Dixit, et facta sunt mandavit, et creata sunt.* At vero in hoc et in dictis suis sustinuit contradictores, et in factis observatores, et in tormentis illusores, et in morte exprobratores. *Ecce quomodo dilexit.* . . . Dilexit autem dulciter, sapienter, fortiter. . . . Disce, O Christianæ, a Christo quemadmodum diligas Christum. Disce amare dulciter, amare prudenter, amare fortiter, etc.

bitten by a viper, yet interrupted not his meditation on that account, but continued unmoved, until he had quite completed his prayer. Thus it was that the saints became so humble, so loving, and so devout to God.

CHAPTER III.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ESSENCE AND THE ACCIDENTS OF DEVOTION. CERTAIN PRACTICAL AND USEFUL DEDUCTIONS.

224. DEVOTION consists, as we have said, in a certain readiness of the will to perform acts of worship and whatever else belongs to the service of God. And we have also stated the sources from whence devotion springs. We may now observe that this promptitude of the will for good (which is a spiritual act of a faculty immaterial and rapid in its operations), finds an echo at times in the sensitive or inferior portion of our being, producing certain emotions which move to sighs and tears, and which even, if it do not always affect in this manner the outer senses, causes us to feel inwardly a pleasurable sensation. This, if it increase in intensity, becomes so sweet that we would not change it for any delight of earth. Now this is what ascetic writers mean by spiritual consolation. I will make this plain by an illustration from daily life. When people occupy one and the same house, but live on different floors, he ho lives on the highest story is not heard by those below, if he tread lightly; but if he walk heavily, the noise of his steps will be heard in the apartments beneath him, and none of his movements will escape the knowledge of those in the house. So too, our will, in applying itself with promptitude to acts of piety, at times performs its operations in so spiritual and delicate a manner, that our inferior part has no share in this rapid movement; nay, it happens not seldom that it will even feel repugnance, weariness, and disgust, at that which the will sets itself to do in all readiness and earnestness.

At other times, it will come to pass, that while the will applies itself with promptitude to good and holy exercises, its actions will find an echo—so to speak—in the inferior part, and then the sensitive appetite will experience a certain very pleasing and delightful sensible affection, which brings this appetite, animal though it be of itself, to combine with the will in seeking after this good, in embracing it with all its affections, and in working with due punctuality and exactness.

225. All this is devotion, but still not of the essence of devotion. The substance, the quintessence, the very marrow of devotion, consists in the readiness of the will to perform whatever concerns the honour and the service due to God. So that, if the will be ready and prompt to do such actions, it must, in all strictness, be called devout, and its acts are those of a real and solid devotion, however repugnant they may be to the inferior part which may strive to check, thwart, and oppose it in its pious determinations. The sensible and pleasurable feeling experienced in the heart, or in the sensitive portion of our being, is something merely accidental to devotion; or rather, to speak more correctly, forms an integral portion of devotion, but does not constitute its essence; it only completes and perfects the virtue. For it is unquestionable that a man may have devotion without experiencing any such feelings, provided that, despite the repugnance of his senses, he maintains his will in readiness for well-doing.

226. That this separation between essential and accidental devotion can, and in fact does, take place, is a truth that no disciple of Christ is allowed to call in question, as He himself affords us a most unmistakable and noteworthy example of this severance. It is certain that, in the prayer which our Blessed Lord poured forth in the Garden of Gethsemane, He felt no sensible devotion in the inferior or sensitive part, but, on the contrary, was harassed in this part of His nature by all those passions which are the greatest hindrances to devotion; such as weariness, sadness, alarm, and profound disgust.* At the same time, it is no less certain that there existed in His will the highest

* Cœpit pavere, tædere, et mœstus esse. Marc. xiv. 33.

devotion to His eternal Father; for, in spite of the resistance of His senses, He was ready to submit to His Father's will, and, for the honour of His Father, to undergo scourgings, thorns, the Cross, outrages, injuries, and the most painful of all deaths. Of this He gave proof both by word and deed. By word, when He declared to His Father, "*Not My will, but Thine be done;* not what My frail flesh would wish, but only what Thy call requires."* By His actions; for, on the approach of the ministers of justice, He awaited not their coming up to Him, but went forward to meet them, and of free choice offered Himself to undergo all those inflictions from which His human nature shrank in its sensitive part.† Further, our Redeemer, on rising from that most agonising prayer to rouse His slumbering disciples, taught them that devotion might exist in a will ready to do every good deed, in opposition to the undevoutness of the rebellious flesh: *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Observe that even when the flesh is weak, the spirit may be ready to do whatever the honour and good pleasure of God require.‡ Alvarez de Paz observes aptly on this passage, that Christ, having set us a most perfect pattern of every virtue, in this most sorrowful prayer, would show Himself to us as the model and prototype of true and solid devotion, to the end, that even amid the gainsayings of our frail and indevout senses, we also may do violence to ourselves, in order to fulfil, with great readiness of disposition, all that our God requires of us.§

227. We have another clear instance of this in the Apostle St. Paul. He says of himself: *For to will is present to me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.*|| *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law in my*

* Non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat. Luc. xxij. 41.

† Surgite, eamus. Marc. xiv. 42.

‡ Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro vero infirma. Marc. xiv. 38.

§ Christus secundum quod homo, sicut fuit perfectissimum universalium virtutum exemplar, ita se ipsum exhibuit prototypum veræ et substantialis devotionis. . . . Hic erit noster conatus, hoc desiderium, ut in omnibus Dei voluntate formemur, et promptissime ei servire velimus. Lib. ij. part 3. cap. 1.

|| Velle, adjacet mihi; perficere autem bonum, non invenio. Rom. vij. 18.

*members, warring against the law of my mind.** Cornelius à Lapide, in his commentary on these words, says that the meaning of St. Paul is as follows: "I have a right and ready will to do good and to serve God by the perfect observance of all His commandments; but I cannot, without great effort, do that which I will, for though *the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak* and *wars against the spirit.*"† Thus the great Apostle of the Gentiles found himself, at times, devoid of sensible and accidental devotion, but he never failed in substantial devotedness of a will resolved, ready, and most prompt in the performance of whatever God's service demanded of Him. Essential devotion may, therefore, be separated from its accidents or complement, and is in reality found apart from them even in those whose sanctity is remarkable.

228. From these indisputable principles I will now proceed to draw a few practical conclusions, without which the reader will not be able to direct even himself, much less others, in the path of Christian perfection. In the first place, I infer that devotion, in its essence at least, is necessary for all who aspire to be perfect; for, to be willingly, and of one's own choice, slow, lazy and negligent in what concerns God's honour and service—as, for instance, in the full observance of His commandments, in prayer, the frequentation of the Sacraments, and other actions connected with the worship of God and the practice of solid virtue—is nothing else but an unmistakable lukewarmness of spirit which, as is obvious, is diametrically opposed to perfection. Hence, to make any progress in this path, we must at least have a ready willingness to do what we ought for God's service, not only because, as was shown in a foregoing Chapter, devotion springs from divine charity, as from its source; but also because, as St. Thomas says, it in turn nourishes and increases that charity,

* **Condelector enim legi Dei secundum interiorem hominem**; video autem aliam legem **in membris meis**, repugnantem legi mentis meæ. Ad Rom. vij. 18, 23.

† **Facultas, et bona voluntas volendi id quod bonum est, est** in me justificato; sed vix, et non nisi difficulter illud perficere possum. *Spiritus enim promptus est, caro autem infirma,* immo reluctans spiritui.

wherein all our perfection consists.* And this he illustrates by the analogous instance of fatty matter which maintains the natural heat, and is in its turn increased by this same natural heat.

229. My next conclusion (which is that of Father Alvarez de Paz just quoted) is, that all should strive might and main to acquire devotion, at least as to its essence.† Now, the efforts we must make are twofold. First: To ask it incessantly of God; for, as faith teaches, He will never withhold those graces which are needed for our salvation, or for the perfection which is suitable to us. He has pledged Himself to that effect, and has published the promise to the whole world in the holy Gospel—*Ask, and you shall receive.* This alone should suffice to assure us, and to encourage us to unceasing prayer. Nay more, St. Ambrose says that continual calling upon the name of Jesus, and recourse to Him at all times, is an act of real and holy devotion.‡ Secondly: The second requisite is that, on our part, we omit nothing which may enable us to overcome the hardness, the repugnance, and the drawbacks we experience in our sensuality, at such times as we are deprived of sensible devotion; and that we endeavour to overcome the disgust and weariness of spirit we may feel in prayer and in other exercises of piety. We must, therefore, take heart, and overcome every obstacle that hinders us from the perfect observance of God's commandments and the practice of virtue; since God, on beholding our endeavours, will not fail to give us the graces needed in order to render such homage and service with all readiness of will. This we may assert on the authority of St. Augustine, who says that God will never refuse His helping grace to such as do what in them lies to serve Him with due punctuality.§

* Caritas et devotionem causat, in quantum ex amore aliquis redditur promptus ad serviendum amico, et etiam per devotionem caritas nutritur. 2, 2, qu. 82, art. 2 ad 3.

† Hæc cum ita sint, sollicite invigilandum est, ut oratio nostra hanc substantialem, et solidam devotionem accendat, et accensam augeat, donec nos promptissimos ad divina obsequia reddat.

‡ Hoc nomen (nempe Domini Jesu) invocetur diebus, et noctibus; nullum tempus precandi vacuum sinat sancta devotio præterire.

§ Facienti quantum in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam.

230. Of this we have a most notable example in that seraph of Mount Carmel, St. Teresa. In her life, written by herself,* she relates the excessive repugnance she felt at leaving her father's house to withdraw into the cloister, as well as the fidelity and firmness wherewith, despite the struggles of nature rebelling against her will, she accomplished this great sacrifice. "I remember very well," she writes, "and may say it in all truth, that I felt such pain on leaving home that I do not expect even when I die to feel a greater. It seemed to me as if each one of my bones was being wrenched from its joint; for, not having the love" (the Saint means the sensible love) "of God, to neutralise the affection I felt for my father and kindred, I had to do myself so much violence, that unless the Lord had come to my help, my own reflections would never have availed to enable me to go forward. It was His goodness alone that gave me that courage against myself which enabled me to fulfil my design." We may here make some few observations which will show clearly the meaning of what I have been saying. First, that to forsake the world with a view to sacrifice one's self wholly to the divine service in a religious community is an act of religion, and holds a high place among the acts of this virtue. Secondly, that St. Teresa, while performing an act so honourable to God, had in the inferior part of her nature none of that devotion which is termed accidental; since far from experiencing any taste or inclination for this course, she had all these feelings which war the most fiercely against devotion—such deep aversion and such poignant anguish, that she likens them to the tortures of dislocated bones, and to the very agonies of death. In spite of all which, she formed her generous resolve, with a devotion quite heroic, as far as the essence of devotion is concerned; for bravely overcoming all her inward reluctance, and trampling underfoot pleasures, honours, her family wealth, her love for her kindred, she ran, nay she flew, to take shelter within the sacred enclosure, and was spurred on to greater determination and promptitude by the very struggling and shrinking of nature. This resolution it was—as she herself declares—which surmounted all her deepest

* Cap. 4.

repugnance, at the same time that it did not show itself to the eyes of those around her. "No one," she tells us, "was aware of my inward conflict, and I only got credit for a most hearty will." But wherefore did God impart to the Saint that grace which buoyed her up amid these assaults of her lower nature and its tormenting passions? She herself will inform us: "I received grace, because I did great violence to myself, and failed not in any point of my duty." Thus too should we behave. If inclination be wanting in the sensitive appetite; if we feel repugnance and loathing for prayer and other virtuous acts by which God would have us worship Him; let our will be determined, firm in overcoming obstacles, and prompt in the fulfilment of our duty. Should we not find sufficient strength in ourselves, we must ask it of God, and do on our part what in us lies; for God, on His part, will not be wanting to us and will surely impart to us what we need. Let none think themselves dispensed from this course of action; for therein lies the very kernel of devotion. This gives to every solid virtue its origin, price and merit; this confers on Christian perfection the fulness of its increase.

231. Thirdly I gather, that though sensible devotion be only an accident, we should not depise or make little of it, nor should we follow Molinos, who ignorantly asserts: "That whoever desires and strives after sensible devotion, does wrong by such desire and striving." And with still greater impiety does the same writer lay down that, "Whatever sensible affection is experienced in the spiritual life is wholly abominable, defiled and unclean."* Sensible delight or spiritual consolation springing from supernatural objects is worthy of our highest esteem. First, because it is a gift of God, Who imparts it to His servants for a holy purpose; and nothing that comes from God's hands can be otherwise than most precious. Secondly, because it is highly commended in the Divine Scriptures. The Psalmist tells us to *taste and see that the Lord is sweet.*† And again: *How sweet is Thy word to my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*‡ St.

* Propos. Molin. 26 et 30 damn. ab Innoc. XI.

† Gustate, et videte, quoniam suavis est Dominus. **Psal.** xxxiij. 9.

‡ Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua, super mel ori meo Psal. cxviij, 103

Paul exhorts, nay urges us, ever to rejoice in the Lord,* and teaches that among the fruits of the Spirit are *Love, joy, and peace.*† Our Saviour Himself tells us to *ask whatever we would, that our joy may be full.*‡ I pass by countless other texts wherein the same is taught to us. Thirdly, because of themselves, and apart from the abuse which may be made of them, spiritual consolations are a great help to advancing in perfection. Hence the Psalmist had reason to say: *I will run in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart with Thy sweetness.*§ The reason is obvious: These spiritual consolations are very gratifying to the sensitive appetite, and thus lessen the repugnance it feels for well-doing. And further, they detach the heart from earthly delights by their pure, genuine, and heartfelt sweetness, and join the inferior with the higher part of our being, making them combine to honour God by prayer and to serve Him by the practice of true and solid virtue. Thus does devotion attain its perfection, since by its help the whole man becomes more prompt to do homage and service to the Creator.

232. Richard of St. Victor explains this most aptly whem commenting on the expression of the Psalmist, *Homo unanimis* (a man of like mind with myself). He interprets it to mean one in whom mind and body are in harmony.‖ And indeed, when the interior man begins to eat the same spiritual food as the exterior one, and to communicate to him the sweetness of his affections, the greater their progress by means of this chaste alliance in the purity and blamelessness of their actions, the more swiftly do they both run hand in hand, in the way of the Lord.¶ And

* Gaudete in Domino semper, iterum dico gaudete. Ad Phil. iv. 4.

† Fructus Spiritûs est caritas, gaudium, et pax. Ad Galat. v. 22.

‡ Petite, et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum. Joan. xvi. 24.

§ Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri, cum dilatâsti cor meum. Psal. cxviij. 32.

‖ Tu vero homo unanimis, dux meus, et notus meus: qui simul mecum dulces capiebas cibos, in domo Dei ambulavimus cum consensu. Psal. liv. 14, 15.

¶ Cum ergo cœperit homo ille interior domesticum suum talibus cibis reficere, potest de eo veraciter psallere: *Qui mecum dulces capiebas cibos.* Talibus ergo studiis, quanto uterque homo (interior nempe, et exterior) amplius ad puritatem proficiunt, tanto uterque alacrius currunt. Lib. ij., De Contempl., cap. 17.

indeed, as Suarez observes, it is made plain by experience that of themselves these consolations afford much aid to the prompt (and consequently devout) doing of good works; for whatever we do with pleasure and satisfaction, is done with ease and expedition.* On this account it is that God is accustomed to rain down this heavenly manna on His servants, especially at the outset of their spiritual life; and He continues so to do, until by these means their wills are solidly grounded in good, and strengthened to labour for His sake without any of these pleasant inducements.

233. I infer, fourthly, from this, that when it pleases God to bestow these spiritual consolations on the soul, we should receive them; but, in doing so, we must have entire detachment and deep humility, and we must be careful to put them to a good use. I say entire detachment, because every attachment, even to God's gifts, is harmful, and holds back the soul from perfection. God's gifts are not Himself, and He will have the soul attached to nothing but Himself. Hence we must not eagerly plunge into these sensible affections, holy though they be, but we must receive them with a certain superiority of soul, bearing in mind that they do not constitute perfection, but are only means of attaining to it. I require also deep humility, since we must ever remember that, so far from deserving these consolations, we are utterly unworthy of them, and that God bestows them with the sole purpose of strengthening our frailty. Hence, instead of feeling self-complacency in what we are allowed to enjoy, we should, on the contrary, humble ourselves and be covered with confusion, even as a criminal who, instead of bearing the punishment of his misdeeds, beholds himself caressed by his prince. Lastly, I say that we must put them to a good use, for we should regard this sensible sweetness as given to us not for our gratification, but to enable us to do good, to make us ready to practise mortification, undergo humiliation and deny ourselves; to make us earnest in all pious duties, and every act of virtue;

* Constat hoc genus consolationis seu gaudii, per se multum conferre ad promptitudinem operationis: quia ea quæ delectabiliter, et suaviter facimus, promptius, et facilius præstamus. Lib ij., De Orat., cap. 6, num. 18.

such being the ends for which God bestows these consolations upon us.

234. St. Augustine, at the time when he was born again to God in holy Baptism, was overwhelmed with these spiritual delights. He tells us that he was never satiated with the tender sweetness which filled his heart: that on hearing the chants and hymns that resounded through the Church, he felt himself inwardly affected with a sweet emotion, and was constrained to find relief in tears of joy. He says that while these devout sounds were entering his ears, the truths of God melted in his soul, and enkindled therein a fervent affection, which changed his eyes into two fountains of sweet tears and filled him with peace and contentment.* These holy emotions were for the Saint as the wings on which he soared to the heights of sanctity; for he received them in all humility, as his writings plainly show, and made use of them to renounce the world without delay and to devote himself, without the least reserve, wholly to the service of God.

235. Fifthly, I infer that, failing these sensible consolations, and the soul hence remaining dry and desolate, we must not be disquieted, but be calmly and peacefully resigned to God's good pleasure, believing (as is true) that God has so ordered it for our good and greater progress. It is no easy task to receive divine consolations in the manner just now set forth. Human nature is too eager after pleasure, especially when it is spiritual, which is equivalent to saying, when it has most relish and sweetness; and when happiness falls to our lot it is difficult for us not to get attached to it. Experience proves this only too plainly, since devout people for the most part are filled with apprehension and gloom as often as these consolations are withdrawn. I have known a person who had led a most blameless life from earliest

* Nec satiabar illis diebus dulcedine mirabili, considerare altitudinem consilii tui super salutem generis humani. Quantum flevi in hymnis, et canticis, suave sonantis ecclesiæ tuæ vocibus commotus acriter! Voces illæ influebant auribus meis, et eliquabatur veritas tua in cor meum, et ex eâ æstuabat affectus pietatis, et currebant lacrymæ, et mihi bene erat cum illis. Confess., lib. ix. cap. 6.

childhood, in great fervour of spirit, who, when deprived of these consolations, fell into such deep and confirmed melancholy, that it weighed him down into the lowest depths of all the miseries which can befall our frail humanity.

236. Neither is it easy to maintain humility amid these spiritual delights, since in times of consolation the soul has little or no feeling of inward conflict; even mortification and penitential fervour become easy, prayer is found to be a feast, and every virtuous act a delightful task. Whence we soon come to the conviction that we have overcome ourselves, conquered our passions and acquired great virtue. This persuasion is soon followed by a certain self-esteem, complacency in our good actions, a preference of ourselves to those in whom we do not perceive the same earnestness; and at length we lose ourselves in these vain affections and silly imaginings. For, in such case, we fail to see that this slumbering of the passions, this ease in well-doing, is not virtue, since it does not flow from a habit fixed and rooted in the soul, but from a certain sensible impulse of grace, on the cessation of which we find ourselves to be exactly what we were before, with all our former hardness and insensibility.

237. Nor do all succeed in making a good use of consolations, for some there are who, wholly engrossed by the spiritual emotions with which they overflow, if I may so say, care not to do good, believing that the essence of devotion, its very solid substance, consists in this relish of devout affections by which alone they are sanctified;—hence, when reduced to a state of dryness, they bestir themselves to regain, by means of good works, the devotion they have lost. Such as these mistake the means for the end, and are driven upon quicksands even when the wind is favourable.

238. Now, all this means nothing more than that sensible devotion, though of itself holy and profitable, becomes a source of injury for many, through the abuse they make of it. This is why God deprives them of it, leaving them in dryness, aridity, and hardness of heart. God seeks the welfare of such souls, and hence withholds from them sensible consolations, whenever He foresees that these will prove harmful to them; and He acts thus

not out of hatred, but really out of love and out of the desire He has to see them advance in perfection. Further, God sees that to some souls who have already made a certain progress, dryness is more advantageous than consolation; as on the one hand, their will being strong, they are able to act virtuously without these aids and, on the other, having to work despite the resistance of nature, their wills must do violence to themselves to overcome these obstacles; and so their actions gain in vigour and intensity, and consequently in merit and acceptability to God. This being established, what are we to do when, sensible grace failing us, we find ourselves in dryness and desolation? I answer that we must calmly and peacefully conform ourselves to the Divine Will, resting assured that God has thus arranged for our greater advantage and putting our trust in Him; we must humble ourselves before God, and own that we are unworthy of all sensible consolation on account of our shortcomings. But, above all, we should, on such occasions, apply ourselves, with all the energy of our will, to the practice of devotion in its substance, and should lean firmly on the teachings of faith, which, though obscure, are infallible and certain; we should give ourselves to prayer, and all other acts of virtue in the service of God, with even greater earnestness than when we were illumined with clear lights, and were moved by fervent and most pleasing inward affections. This is the lesson which St. Bonaventure gives to spiritual persons, to whom he says: "That in withdrawing consolation, God would teach us to place our reliance, with unshaken trust, upon Him alone, and upon the guidance afforded by the truths of faith; not upon the experience we gain from our various affections."* Thus did St. Teresa behave, who, in the eighteen years of dryness, during which God proved her by desolation, never failed to practise with all exactness every kind of virtue, and never lessened by a moment of time the many hours she

* Eruditur quod non tantum innitatur experientiâ consolationum, quantum in fiduciâ ad Deum, vel fidei certitudine. . . . Vult enim Dominus erudire nos per subtractionem consolationis, et inniti veritati scripturæ et fidei, potius quam nostræ qualicumque experientiæ. Tom. ij., Ad Process. Rel., cap. 1 in Process. Secund.

daily devoted to prayer. This is solid, robust, and safe devotion.

239. But here two difficulties present themselves for solution, which concern the subject-matter of this Chapter. First, Is it possible to procure for ourselves sensible or accidental devotion. Secondly, Is it lawful to ask it of God? In reply to the former question, I will say that we not only may, but ought, to do so, provided only it be done with the proper conditions. The direct and reasonable ways of seeking after consolation are, not to go to prayer without preparation, to keep ourselves during it attentive and modest, to exert the powers of the mind on supernatural objects, and to take other means usually prescribed by spiritual writers; but especially to remove the obstacles to this devotion, particularly those which will be found enumerated in the next Chapter. Among the indiscreet ways of striving after this object, we may reckon the following :—To force ourselves, to strain our minds, and to give way to other kinds of affectation, which injure the health, and are of no avail for the purpose intended. If with all this God still refuses our wish, we must remain in peace and lowly submission to His adorable will. These methods are prescribed by Denys the Carthusian, as the fittest and most availing. We must take reasonable pains to have this actual or sensible consolation, yet not as if it were indispensable to our salvation, but only as a means of more easily overcoming difficulties in our course, and of despising such things as are agreeable; and we must have entire indifference, leaving it wholly to God's good pleasure to grant or refuse our request, as He may see fit.*

240. As to the second question raised above, we must hold that it is not unlawful to beg of God accidental and sensible devotion, provided the petition be made, not out of self-love, or through attachment to spiritual gratification, but from a desire of

* Pro hâc actuali (nempe consolatione) actualiterque perceptibili laborandum est, non vero tamquam pure necessariâ ad salutem; sed veluti pro quodam adminiculo ad facilius vincendum adversa, et delectabilia contemnenda: et conditione et indifferentiâ quâdam, videlicet committendo hoc voluntati divinæ, dicendo: *Non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu vis*, Deus Pater. Lib. 1 De Gaudio Spirituali, art. 21.

running with more speed along the way of the Lord. "Ask God," says St. Bernard, "that He would give you that bright light of devotion, that cloudless shining sky for your mind, under which, like a veteran soldier, after having braved every danger, you may live without trouble, and, with heart enlarged, may run in the way of God's commandments, so as now to do with ease and pleasure what formerly caused so much anguish and violence of spirit."* But observe who are the persons addressed by the mellifluous Doctor in this passage. They are soldiers who have long fought under the standard of Christ, have toiled much for His glory and bear the laurels of many a victory, so as to have earned the name of brave veterans. These are they who, according to St. Bernard, may with a good face ask the Lord to grant them the reward of some sensible consolation, and some period of sweet repose. I know not whether he would have said the same of those who have been enlisted under God's banner for a few years only, perhaps even only a few months, and have done little or nothing for their Sovereign.

241. Hence, to speak in general terms, it is safer to pray without ceasing, and from our heart, for devotion in its substance, which alone is necessary for our perfection, and which God cannot withhold if we ask it of Him in a fitting manner. As regards accidental devotion, we must be indifferent, and leave ourselves in God's hands, as we cannot tell whether it would be advantageous to us or not. This course of conduct is, moreover, the most perfect, as it is the most conformable to holy humility; for it is not humility to look upon ourselves as veterans in the army of Christ and as having earned repose and reward. The virtue of humility requires rather that we should ever look upon ourselves as beginners, as newly-trained combatants, unworthy of a guerdon. St. Teresa, that great heroine, who did such wonders for her crucified Lord, and won for Him countless souls, tells us that

* Roga, dari tibi devotionis lumen, diem serenissimum, et sabbatum mentis, in quo tamquam emeritus miles in laboribus universis, vivas absque labore, dilatato nimirum corde currens viam mandatorum Dei, ut quod prius cum amaritudine, et coactione tui spiritûs faciebas, de cetero jam cum summâ dulcedine peragas, et delectatione. Serm. 3 De Circumc.

she never presumed to ask for sensible devotion, since, although she knew it to be lawful, she accounted herself unworthy of it. On one occasion, being overcome by a most intense dryness of spirit, she ventured to put up such a prayer to God; but, reflecting upon what she had done, she felt such shame, that the very inward confusion—being full of calm and peace—produced within her the consolation which she blushed to have asked for. I will quote her own words: "I never had the boldness to ask God to give me spiritual relish, or the tenderness of devotion, but only that He would impart grace and strength never to offend Him, and pardon for my grievous sins, which being in my eyes so very heinous, I durst not entertain an ardent desire for favours and consolations. His divine loving-kindness seemed to my mind to have done a great deal, and to have now treated me with signal mercy in merely suffering me to stand before Him, and in drawing me into His presence, into which, as I am full well aware, I should never have gone had His infinite majesty not taken such peculiar care of me. I remember but once during my whole life, when afflicted with the most intense dryness, having prayed for these consolations; but as soon as I saw what I was doing, I was covered with such confusion that the very grief I felt at finding myself so wanting in humility, obtained for me what I had presumed to ask for. I knew full well that it was lawful to put up such a prayer, but (to my mind) only in the case of those who have prepared themselves for it by earnest strivings after solid devotion, which consists in not offending God, and in being ready and determined for every good work."* Let the pious reader peruse attentively these words, and he will find in them the whole of the doctrine on which we found our answer to the second question.

* Life of St. Teresa, chap. 9.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HINDRANCES TO DEVOTION.

242. THE first hindrance to devotion is an attachment to the consolations and pleasures of earth, though they may not of themselves be sinful. The Apostle says that the spirit and the flesh are contrary one to the other,* and so, too, are those affections in which the one and the other find their nourishment. He who would enjoy spiritual delights must renounce the worldly gratifications on which the flesh is supported. All those who seek after earthly pleasures must needs forego the heavenly consolations with which the spirit is nourished. And as heaven and earth cannot unite, neither can we combine the delights of earth with those that heaven vouchsafes to them that seek it. Hence St. Bonaventure says: "He that would taste the sweetness of divine love must renounce the alien pleasures of this world. Spiritual consolations are of a delicate nature, nor can they be imparted to him who keeps his heart open to those which come from the outer world. That soul of a certainty deprives itself of heavenly delights which does not entirely forego fleeting and transitory pleasures. It is a most woeful delusion to fancy that we can commingle the sweetness of heaven with the gratifications of the flesh—balm with poison—spiritual unctions with the baits of sensuality."†

243. This is what St. Bonaventure has most excellently said; but St. Bernard sets it forth more in detail, descending to particular cases. He draws two pictures, one of a Religious, who is devout in all he does, the other of one altogether indevout; and accounting for the devotion of the one and the absence of it in

* Hæc enim sibi invicem adversantur. Ad Galat. v. 17.

† Renuat consolari anima tua in alienis, si vis Dei amore delectari. Delicata siquidem consolatio est, nec omnino tribuitur admittentibus alienam. Cujus mens ad alienas inhiat consolationes et non penitus renuit in caducis et transitoriis consolari, ipse sibi profecto subtrahit cœlestis gratiam consolationis. Errat omnino, si quis cœlestem illam dulcedinem huic carni, divinum illud balsamum huic veneno, chrismata iifa spiritûs misceri posse hujusmodi illecebris arbitratur. In Collat. vj. et viij.

the other, he assigns the very reason which we have just touched upon. Some monks, he says, not only walk but run, nay fly to the fulfilment of their several religious duties. Watchings seem to them short, coarse food is to them a dainty, their rough garb is soft, toil and fatigue are not only bearable but welcome to them.* "There you have a Religious who is devout, who is ready for whatever concerns the service of God. But others do not behave thus, they go to these various spiritual exercises with hearts full of dryness, with a reluctant will, hardly dragged to their performance by the fear of hell-fire."† This is the portrait of indevout Religious, who are slothful and indolent in all that regards God's service. Then, to account for this difference he proceeds to observe that: "This sloth, this laziness, this lukewarmness, come from the fact that their wills are not wholly purified; and, from their being allured and distracted by their hankering after certain trivial gratifications, they fail to seek for spiritual goods in the way they know to be required of them. They are fond of certain petty gratifications of the lower appetite, found either in breaking silence, or in some gesture or action, and if so be that they forego these for a while, they are never wholly detached from them."‡ And he concludes with the remark that, "Spirit and flesh, fervour and lukewarmness, are incompatible in one and the same person, especially as lukewarmness, as we read in the Apocalypse, moves the Lord to loathing."§ Whoever, then, desires the former, must necessarily give up the latter, by denying himself certain slight gratifications, which are by so much the

* Quidam ad omnia viæ et vitæ hujus exercitia non solum ambulant, sed et currunt, immo potius volant, ut eis vigiliæ breves et cibi dulces, et panni suaves, labores non solum tolerabiles, sed appetibiles videantur. Serm. 3, De Ascens. Domini.

† Alii autem non sic, sed corde arido, et affectione recalcitrante, vix trahuntur ad hæc, vix gehennali timore compelluntur.

‡ Inde autem tam periculosa tepiditas emanat, quia affectus, id est voluntas eorum nondum purgata est; nec bonum sic volunt, sicut noverunt, a propriâ cupiditate abstracti graviter et illecti. Amant enim suas terrenas consolatiunculas sive in verbo, sive in signo, sive in facto, sive in aliquo alio. Si hæc interrumpunt aliquando, non tamen penitus rumpunt.

§ Neque enim spiritus et caro, ignis et tepiditas in uno domicilio commorantur, præsertim cum tepiditas ipsi Domino soleat vomitum provocare.

more prejudicial to the spirit as they are the more conformable to the instincts of the flesh, and hence extinguish devotion by rendering us lukewarm and remiss in well-doing.

244. The next hindrance to devotion is want of purity of heart. We do not mean hereby the abominable vice which the phrase suggests. This vice is not a mere hindrance to devotion, but destroys it utterly, since, by depriving us of sanctifying grace, it gives the death-blow to charity. The want of purity of which we are speaking consists in wilful venial sins and in defects committed with advertence; for these defile the heart and make it unclean. To confine what we say to these slight faults, it may be laid down that even such faults, if they be wilful, take away both the essence and feeling of devotion; for, though they do not quench, they cool down, charity, and, as all know, render it remiss in its workings. Now, if charity waxes lukewarm by frequently-repeated wilful faults, whence can the will derive fervour for the prompt fulfilment of what God's service requires? How can charity which has itself become languid, render the will prompt and earnest in well-doing? Therefore he who would attain devotion and relish the savoury fruits of its sweetness and fervour, must keep guard over his heart, that it may not knowingly be defiled by any stain of fault; he must take heed to his doings lest he transgress; and by ceaseless mortification he must hold in constant check the several motions of the unruly passions which are perpetually rising up to sully the purity of his soul, else will he never attain to the taste of the sweet nectar of devotion. As St. Gregory says: "Then do they who are said to be fasting eat and get filled at the spiritual table, when they feed on the sweet devotion of divine grace, which they have disposed themselves to receive by a great watchfulness over their own hearts."*

245. The third hindrance to devotion is found in needless occupations, which distract the mind, dissipate the heart, and alienate both from God. St. Thomas says that devotion springs from the consideration of whatever is fitted to enkindle the love

* Vocati jejuni, tunc comedunt, quando hi spiritualis gratiæ devotione pascuntur, qui ad eam percipiendam se magnâ mentis suæ custodiâ paraverunt. Lib. iv., In I. Reg. cap. 9.

of God within us. But the thoughts of what, far from appertaining to these devout objects, diverts the mind from them, are a hindrance to devotion.* Even the wicked Pharaoh was aware of this; for, wishing to divert the Hebrews from their pious resolve of going to offer sacrifice to God in the wilderness, he overburdened them with tasks to such an extent that they were wholly crushed beneath the pressure; hoping that, amid so many occupations, they would have no time to entertain the pious thought of honouring God with their offering. "They have not enough to do," said this wily king; "this is why they raise their voice, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' We will oppress them with tasks beyond their strength, and force them to complete all to the utmost; they will then give up listening to the lying words of Moses, who is urging them to sacrifice by false messages from God."†

246. That the excessive tasks laid on the Hebrews by Pharaoh were well calculated to divert them from the worship of God, is clearly shown in the parable of the Great Supper, spoken by Christ. This banquet may be taken to signify the plenteous and dainty food of devotion bestowed by God on well-disposed souls, not only at the Eucharistic Table, but in all their prayers and acts of worship and of piety. Who were they that loathed the divine banquet, and excused themselves from coming? Those who were the most occupied and absorbed in temporal business. The reply of the first to the courteous invitation was: *I have bought a farm, and I must needs go and see it.*‡ The next answers: *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them.*§ The third excuses himself, saying: *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*‖ Then the master of the house, the figure of our

* Dicendum, quod consideratio eorum, quæ nata sunt dclectationem Dei excitare, devotionem causat. Consideratio vero quorumcumque ad hoc non pertinentium, sed ab eis mentem distrahentium, impedit devotionem. 2, 2, quæst. 82, art. 2, ad 1.

† Vacant enim, et idcirco vociferantur, dicentes: Eamus et sacrificemus Deo nostro. Opprimantur operibus et explcant ea, ut non acquiescant verbis mendacibus. Exod. v. 8, 9.

‡ Villam emi et necesse habeo exire, et videre illam.

§ Juga boum emi quinque, et eo probare illa.

‖ Uxorem duxi, ideo non possum venire.

Blessed Saviour, orders to bring in the poor, the halt and lame who were scattered about the streets and public places; for, being free from all this business and these occupations, they were better fitted to relish the dainties of His table. And so it really came to pass; the latter were brought in, while the former, plunged as they were in worldly business, were for ever excluded from this magnificent banquet.* Now most men in their eagerness for wealth, station, empty and fleeting honours, pass their whole lives in dissipation and distractions—even when not overwhelmed by continual labours, studies, and other absorbing occupations—without ever recollecting themselves in their own hearts, which are the inner chamber where God loves to entertain devout souls. What wonder then that so few ever taste the delicious fruits of a true devotion?

247. I must own to having ever been deeply impressed by what St. Bernard wrote on this purpose to Pope Eugenius. "I fear," says the Saint, with a holy liberty, to Eugenius his former disciple—"I fear lest, amid the numerous occupations in which you are absorbed, your soul may become hardened and that by degrees you may lose the feeling of a useful and holy compunction. You would deal more prudently by withdrawing at times from your labours, lest they drag you in their wake, and lead you, step by step, whither you would not go. You may ask, where? I will reply: To hardness of heart. This is the term to which these accursed occupations will bring you, if you continue as you have begun to give yourself up wholly to them, without reserving some leisure to commune with yourself in your heart."† Thus did the great St. Bernard address the Supreme Pontiff, whose occupations were most surely neither trivial, indifferent, nor slight,

* Dico autem vobis, quod nemo illorum virorum qui vocati sunt, gustabit cænam meam. Luc. xiv. 18.

† Vereor, inquam, ne in mediis occupationibus (quoniam multæ sunt) dum diffidis finem, frontem dures, et ita sensim teipsum quodam modo sensu prives justi, utilisque doloris. Multo prudentius te illis subtrahas, vel ad tempus, quam patiare trahi ab illis, et duci certe paullatim quo tu non vis. Quæris quo? Ad cor durum. . . . Et quo trahere te debent hæ occupationes maledictæ, si tamen pergis, ut cœpisti, ita te dare totum illis, nil tui tibi relinquens? De Consid. lib. i.

as on his shoulders rests the government of the whole world. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the sainted Abbot would not have him so absorbed therein, as not to allow himself time for self-recollection; fearing lest, if undertaken with excess, they would come at length to quench in him every sentiment of devotion, and lead him into a dangerous hardness of heart. What, then, may we not say of those who give themselves up so unreservedly to business, to the affairs and interests of this life, as if this were the sole end for which God had placed them in the world? Is it possible for true devotion to strike root in hearts such as theirs?

248. I am far from implying by this that we are not bound to fulfil faithfully all the duties imposed on us by our state, and to undergo the labours which charity demands or obedience imposes. I only say that we must beware of excess, which may always be avoided, if in our occupations, however numerous they are, we observe these two things. First, to find time for recollecting ourselves occasionally in God, by some spiritual exercise, even as St. Bernard prescribes to Pope Eugenius, and as St. Jerome advises Celantia, busily employed as she was in household affairs: "Choose for thyself, Celantia, a place in thy house free from the noise and bustle of thy family, whither thou mayest frequently withdraw to calm thy soul, agitated by domestic cares."* Whoever does this, will not lose his devotion, although he may be much engaged in business; for, even if amid distracting cares devotion becomes somewhat lukewarm, it speedily, by these precautions, regains its warmth and glow.

249. The second thing to be observed is, to keep God before us in the midst of our outward occupations, especially when they press upon us; carefully directing whatever we are engaged in to Him, with a sincere intention of doing His will and of pleasing Him. Our daily business, however engrossing and continuous it may be, if performed in this manner, can do no harm to our devotion. The reason is plain. We have said above with St.

* Eligatur tibi opportunus, et aliquantulum a familiæ strepitu remotus locus, in quem veluti in portum, quasi ex multâ tempestate curarum te recipias, et excitatos foris cogitationum fluctus secretâ tranquillitate componas.

Thomas, that those thoughts only which relate not to God are an obstacle to devotion. But our every work invites us to God, when offered to Him and performed with a view to His good pleasure; so that in such case no action can hinder or lessen our devotion. Even our very occupation, distracting as it may be of itself, will serve but to stir it up the more, to render it more earnest and more ardent.

250. Let us take as an instance the holy king David. He had to bear the burden of the government of a people so numerous as to be likened to the stars of heaven and the sands on the sea-shore; it was therefore impossible for him to have his harp ever in his hands, and holy canticles of praise to God always in his mouth; much less could he be always rapt in lofty contemplation: for this would have involved too grievous a neglect of the duties of his position. But what did the devout Prince do to maintain the fervour of his devotion amid the many weighty matters he had to handle? He shall reply for himself: "Though the business of my kingdom be ever resounding in my ears, *mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.** I take Him as the guide of my actions, and direct them to Him. *I have set the Lord always before me*, and while dealing with men, I fail not to commune with my God."† If the reader will but do likewise, he may rest assured that his engagements, even when most pressing, will neither hinder his devotion nor cause its diminution.

251. The fourth hindrance to devotion is anxiety and trouble amid the divers vicissitudes which may happen in the course of the day. We are not unfrequently warned in the Sacred Scriptures against these disquieting anxieties, which quench devotion, even as water puts out fire. *But I would have you be without solicitude*, says the Apostle;‡ and Christ Jesus warns us *Not to be anxious for the morrow.*§ *Therefore be not solicitous, saying, What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewith shall we be clothed?*‖

* Oculi mei semper ad Dominum. Psal. xxiv. 15.

† Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper. Psal. xv. 8.

‡ Volo vos sine sollicitudine esse. I. ad Cor. vij. 31.

§ Nolite solliciti esse in crastinum. Matth. vi. 34.

‖ Nolite solliciti esse, dicentes: quid manducabimus? aut quid bibemus? aut quo operiemur?

—necessary as are all these things to support life. And He explains the reason in the Parable of the Sower, in the interpretation given by Himself. *That which fell among thorns* signifies the inward inspiration or motion of the Spirit of grace stirred up within us by the divine word, which is choked by worldly cares, even as wheat is choked by thorns and briers.* This is why they who are agitated by harassing anxieties have their heart always cold and constrained.

252. If the reader desire a yet further reason, St. Laurence Justinian will supply it. As we cannot see the sun in the sky when it is covered by dense clouds, nor behold our face in the waters if the stream be troubled, so too, when the mind is overcast and the soul agitated by disquieting cares, we cannot, either in time of prayer or still less out of it, contemplate those divine truths which have the power to kindle devotion within us.† What wonder, then, if such an one remain lukewarm, languid and indevout? He then that would preserve a steady devotion, must free his soul from all care and disquiet, and keep it in calm and serenity.

253. Further hindrances to devotion might be mentioned, for, in very deed, whatever is opposed to the overflow of grace and the increase of charity is an obstacle to devotion, which springs from these as from its fountain-head. I may, therefore, with the above-quoted St. Laurence Justinian, say in general, that as the husbandman toils to rid his fields of thorns and thistles, in order that his crops may be more plenteous, so, he that would savour the sweets of devotion in prayer, must endeavour to get rid of whatever he knows to be an obstacle to the outpouring of this balm of Paradise.‡

* Qui autem seminatus est in spinis, hic est qui verbum audit, et sollicitudo sæculi istius, et fallacia divitiarum suffocat verbum, et sine fructu efficitur. Matth. xij. 22.

† Quemadmodum solis radius nequaquam cernitur, cum commotæ nubes cœli faciem obducunt; nec turbatus fons respicientis imaginem reddit, quam tranquillus propriam ostendit: sic nec inquietus animus Dei caritatem in orationis speculo potest conspicere. De Orat., cap. 5.

‡ Quemadmodum qui terram colit, solerter spinas debet eradicare, ut uberiores valeat colligere fructus; ita qui concupiscit dulcedinem devotionis in oratione gustare, summopere studeat ipsius impedimenta declinare. Ibid., cap. 4.

CHAPTER V.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THIS ARTICLE.

254. First suggestion. The Director cannot be too deeply convinced that it is not a small part of his charge to know how to regulate souls in the use of sensible devotion; for there are few spiritual persons who are able to bear themselves as they ought either while they enjoy it, or when it is taken from them. To some it appears that they fail to make spiritual progress in the exact measure of the insensibility of their affections; and they say this in so many words, complaining that they are daily falling back and deteriorating in perfection; and, what is worse than this, they continually lose heart. In such cases, the Director must attentively examine whether the diminution affect only sensible devotion, or whether it touch the very substance of virtue. He will be best enabled to discover this by looking into their actions during those seasons when their fervour is cooled. If he find them as diligent as ever in prayer and other spiritual duties, and observe that they fail not on their part to make use of the suitable means; if he see them constant in the practice of their usual penances and mortifications and in the exercise of the different virtues; then, although everything proceeds with reluctance, difficulty and coldness, he will make no account of this lessening of fervour, because the essence of true devotion remains whole and intact. As we have shown, the substance of devotion consists in the ready disposition of the will to do good. Now, in their case, this exists undiminished, as is plainly proved by their conduct. He must therefore encourage them, and not allow them to lose heart. He must not be anxious about them, but must strive to assuage their grief and affliction; the more so as it is obvious that God is helping such persons with a hidden grace, for otherwise they could never persevere amid so many untoward circumstances. He will exhort them as Denys the Carthusian prescribes, to thank God for not having left them without the will and desire to serve and please Him; and if they feel not those fervent and burning desires in His service that they would

wish to have, they must humble themselves before God, and at least desire to have them.*

255. If, on the other hand, the Director discover that his penitents are wanting not only in the feeling of devotion but also in its substance; if he find them slothful, negligent and careless in the works of perfection; if he notice that they go a-begging from creatures the comfort they can no longer obtain in their exercises of piety, and that consequently they pour themselves forth upon external objects; that they have no scruple in omitting their devout and virtuous practices, in indulging their passions and falling into unwonted faults; he must bitterly lament before them that they should have fallen into this state of lukewarmness, which not merely affects the accidental properties, but threatens the very life, of devotion. I say, he must grieve for such, for when they are sunk to this imperfect state, they are but little or in nowise concerned at their insensibility. It is wilful; they cherish it, seek it, and care not to rid themselves of it. Wherefore he must strive to awaken such from their torpor by serious rebukes, and remind them that unless they return to their former state, by doing violence to themselves and by fervent prayer to God, they will continue to fall back, with the danger of being hurled over some deep precipice. For this purpose, he may often thunder in their ears the awful threat addressed by God in the Apocalypse to those whose tepidity is wilful; to those, that is, who are lukewarm, not in feeling alone but also in will; for, to their great misfortune, lukewarmness of will must be attributed to them: *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot; so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth;* that is, I will begin to turn My back upon thee, and to forsake thee:† an awful threat, and well suited to

* Sat est, quod nequaquam aversus sit a desiderio spirituali placendi et serviendi Deo: etsi non desideret tam ferventer, ut vellet; de imperfectione suâ humiliter doleat, ac discrete, et cum Psalmistâ ardenter desiderare concupiscat, dicendo: *Concupivit anima mea desiderare justificationes tuas in omni tempore.* De Gaud. Spir., lib. i. art. 21.

† Scio opera tua, quia neque frigidus es, neque calidus. Utinam frigidus

strike terror into the hardest heart. If it make no impression on the soul of the lukewarm penitent, it is a clear sign that he is already beginning to feel the effects of this frightful abandonment.

256. Second suggestion. The Director will meet with certain Religious, who, solely on account of the withdrawal of sensible fervour—though they retain all that constitutes the essence of devotion—not only get disheartened, but are so dejected that they look upon themseives as lost. They take for themselves the threat in the above-quoted text of the Apocalypse which is only addressed by God to those whose tepidity is wilful. They go on in the exceedingly bitter thought that they are outcasts from God; that He will no longer accept their homage and good works; that it were better for them to lay aside their mortifications and spiritual practices, and to conform to the general run of mankind in leading a less restricted life; or they indulge in other similar reflections. Such as these have no cause for thinking and speaking thus, since they still retain what is solid in devotion and virtue, and hence they should be of good cheer. So much the more as these feelings of diffidence and pusillanimity, verging as they do on despair, are commonly suggestions of the devil, who takes occasion from this seeming lack of fervour, to fill the heads of his victims with these gloomy fancies that so he may draw them to their ruin. The Director must then encourage them with these words of St. Bonaventure: "Do not, my Son, lose confidence on account of the withdrawal of inward consolations, as if God had cast thee off and would no longer accept of thy good works. Recall the promises which He makes to thee in Holy Scripture, and rest assured that until thou forsake Him by breaking His laws, His mercy will never fail thee."* This motive is no less true

esses, aut calidus: sed quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo. Apoc. iij. 15, 16.

* Noli diffidere, cum consolatio internæ dulcedinis tibi subtrahitur, quasi Deus dereliquerit te, vel bona opera tua non sint ei accepta, sed recurre ad illa vera testimonia, et consolare in ipsis, scilicet, ut confidas de veritate Dei quamdiu tu non discedis a Deo per consensum ad prævaricationem mandatorum ejus; quia ipse non derelinquit te per propitiationem suam. Tom. ij. De Process. Relig., cap. 1. In Process. iv.

than availing to restore confidence to wavering souls; for it is unquestionable that no one can lose the substance of devotion except by his own will. This devotion consists in our readiness of will, which cannot be remiss if we choose to be earnest in well-doing, by the help, of course, of God's grace, which He never refuses to men of good will.

257. The Director may further counsel the disheartened penitent to repeat frequently these words of Job, so well calculated to cheer a downcast spirit: "O Lord, even if I saw myself on the brink of hell, and on the point of falling, my will is to hope in Thee. Even if God slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Never will I wrong His infinite loving-kindness by despair."* Or he may repeat these words of the Psalmist: *In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; I shall never be confounded.*† *For Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.*‡ By these and the like sentiments will he strive to cheer persons whom the devil seeks to cast down by false and groundless alarms, as if they were wholly forsaken of God.

258. The Director will further observe, that persons such as we are speaking of, at times get so dejected by the want of sensible devotion as to withdraw from Holy Communion, even on days which are appointed them, from the fancy they have that they are in a most deplorable state. If, from their upright and virtuous behaviour, he perceive that they are not wanting in the substance of devotion, he will withstand their groundless reluctance, and compel them to draw nigh to the Holy Table. He may find in St. Laurence Justinian a rule whereby to proceed in such cases. "The indevout," writes the Saint, "they, I mean, who feel no sensible devotion, should not abstain from this sacred banquet, if they live in the state of grace, if their conduct is virtuous, if they humble themselves on account of their miserable lukewarmness, and sincerely confess it; provided only that they approach the Altar with befitting reverence; for these are fed by the Sacrament in a hidden and spiritual manner, and find

* Etiamsi occiderit me, in ipso sperabo. Job xiij. 15.

† In te Domine speravi, non confundar in æternum. Psal. xxx.

‡ Quoniam non derelinquis quærentes te, Domine. Psal. ix. 11.

therein their stay and support."* And the same Saint continues, admirably well: "Because, notwithstanding the want of sensible fervour in these persons, they receive in the Blessed Sacrament not only an increase of sanctifying grace, but those actual helps which strengthen their souls for good works, though these helps be imparted to them in a manner so insensible and spiritual that they themselves are not conscious of the effect. The same happens to them as often happens to the sick, who find no relish in the dainties provided for them, but nevertheless receive nourishment from them. Hence they must not be allowed to forego this heavenly food, even as the sick are not suffered to go without bodily sustenance."

259. Fourth suggestion. The Director will meet with certain women who seem brimful of devotion, but if he look into their behaviour, he will frequently find them falling far short of real and solid devotion. They are easily moved to sighs, to tears of tenderness, to break out into certain pious exclamations; they say a great many vocal prayers, and are eager to communicate frequently. But, on the other hand, they are a constant source of trouble in their homes, easily provoked to anger by their companions, stubborn, disobedient, greedy of gain and their own convenience, impatient, talkative, given to censure the doings of their neighbours. Such devotion as theirs, considered in its sensible aspect, comes rather from a soft and impressionable nature than from a strong and robust grace, and is mostly mixed up with a deal of affectation. If we look to the substantial side of it, we find therein nothing that is good; for, as Blosius aptly observes, "True devotion is grounded on humility, on the denial of self-will and our own views, on conformity to God's good pleasure, on the mortification of our passions, rather than on sensible emotions; for, in reality, the former, not this latter, is a token of that ready willingness to serve God, which is the quint-

* Propterea non debet a sancto Domini convivio repelli indevotus juste vivens, virtuose conversans, humiliter se agnoscens, pure confitens et reverenter accedens; talis quippe insensibiliter et spiritualiter hoc sacramento nutritur et vivit. De Perfect. Monast., cap. 19.

essence of devotion."* The Director must beware not to make any account of this counterfeit devotion, and must inculcate on those that profess it the correct idea of true devotion, and must lead them to put it into practice. As a general rule, he may set great store by that sensible devotion, which brings forth fruits of real virtue, but should be on his guard against that which he finds destitute of such fruits

ARTICLE VII.

On the Virtue of Obedience.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHAT OBEDIENCE CONSISTS, AND TO WHOM IT IS DUE.

260. BESIDES Religion and the habit of Devotion, which, by its ready willingness, enhances and perfects the acts of religion, the holy virtue of Obedience also ranks under Justice; for this too, to speak with St. Thomas, is a relative virtue, inasmuch as it is concerned with our duty to others; that is, with the due subordination of subjects to those set over them. But we must not omit to treat separately of Obedience, because, among the virtues which, on account of some resemblance borne by them to justice are classed under the head of that virtue, obedience is one of the most conspicuous and most necessary for human life in its several relations, political, social, and supernatural. It will be our present duty to explain the merit of this virtue, and the mode in which it is to be practised, to the end that all may be enamoured of it and inflamed with the desire of its attainment.

* Vera devotio in sui ipsius submissione, resignatione, abnegatione ac vilipensione sita est, potius quam in sensibili sapore et dulcedine. In Concil. Animæ, part i., cap. 13, num. 1.

261. St. Thomas defines obedience to be a moral virtue, inclining the will to carry out the commands of those who are lawfully set over us.* By command is here to be understood not only a rigorous precept binding under grievous sin, but every wish of the Superior which is manifested outwardly. If the will of the Superior be made known by words, the precept is called express; if by signs, the meaning of which, though not so clear, is yet sufficiently plain, the precept is called tacit. Now, precepts of either of these kinds are the object of obedience, since the will of the Superior, in whatever way it be made manifest, is the object of this noble virtue. Thus far St. Thomas.†

262. The reader must not think that the object of obedience is found only in the precepts imposed by religious superiors upon their subjects, who are bound by solemn vow to fulfil them. Not so; the virtue of obedience concerns also the commands of princes to their people; of parents to their offspring; of husbands to their wives; of employers to those in their employ; of captains to the soldiers under them; of priests to laymen; in a word, it extends to every reasonable order, given by one who may lawfully command, provided it exceed not the sphere to which the authority giving the order is limited: as the same holy Doctor justly observes.‡

263. This teaching of St. Thomas is, in every point, grounded on Holy Writ, as may be easily discovered by considering its several parts. As regards the obedience due to princes, St. Paul says, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.*§ And writing to Titus, he requires him to put the faithful in mind "to be

* Obedientia reddit promptam hominis voluntatem ad exequendam voluntatem alterius, scilicet præcipientis. 2, 2, quæst. 104, art. 2, ad 3.

† Obedientia est specialis virtus, et ejus speciale objectum est præceptum tacitum, vel expressum. Voluntas enim superioris, quocumque modo innotescat, est quoddam tacitum præceptum. Ibid., in corp.

‡ Tenetur subditus superiori obedire, secundum rationem superioritatis, sicut miles duci exercitûs in his quæ pertinent ad bellum; servus Domino in his quæ pertinent ad servilia opera exequenda; filius patri in his quæ pertinent ad disciplinam vitæ, et ad curam domesticam; et sic de aliis. Art. 5, in corp.

§ Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit. Ad Rom. xiij. 1.

subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates who have legitimate power to command."* And the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, reminds us that this obedience is due to our Superiors for God's sake, from whom their authority is derived.†

264. As regards obedience of children to parents, not content with making it the matter of a commandment, God strikes terror into the disobedient by fearful threats, even so far as to order that, *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father and mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not obey them . . . all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die.*‡ Isaac gave a heroic example of filial obedience, since the most difficult thing a father could command a beloved child is to allow himself to be slaughtered by his own parent's hands. Like an innocent lamb, he suffered himself to be bound by his father and to be laid, without a struggle, on the fatal pile; and, with dauntless gaze, he beheld the gleam of the murderous steel which was to deprive him of life by a single stroke.§ No less heroic, under the New Law, was the obedience of Eustochium to her mother St. Paula, as narrated by St. Jerome. That lady was so submissive to her mother that she never went to bed, never sat down at table, would not take a single step, but at the beck and in company of her mother. She would not touch a penny of the fortune given to her by her parents, but left it wholly in her mother's hands, looking upon this submission as abundant wealth and a most goodly heritage.‖

* Admone illos, principibus et potestatibus subditos esse. Ad Tit. iij. 1.

† Subditi estote omni humanæ creaturæ propter Deum, sive regi, quasi præcellenti, sive ducibus, tamquam ab eo missis. I. Pet. ij. 13.

‡ Si genuerit homo filium contumacem, qui non audiat patris et matris imperium, et coercitus obedire contempserit. lapidibus eum obruat populus. Deut. xxj. 18.

§ Cumque alligâsset Isaac filium suum, posuit eum in altare super struem lignorum, extenditque manum et arripuit gladium, ut immolaret filium suum. Gen. xxij. 9.

‖ Eustochium ita semper adhæsit matri Paulæ, et ejus obedivit imperiis, ut numquam absque eâ cubaret, numquam procederet, nunquam cibum caperet, ne unum quidem nummum haberet potestatis suæ, sed et paternam et maternam substantiam a matre distribui pauperibus lætaretur, et pietatem

265. The Apostle, in his Epistle to Titus, will have wives most faithfully obey their husbands. He tells Titus to instruct married women to "be docile, and meek, and perfectly subject to their own husbands."* St. Monica, as we read in the Confessions of St. Augustine, her son, was a notable instance of this obedience, for, "so soon as she was of marriageable age, being bestowed on Patricius her husband, she served him as a slave serves her master."† And though Patricius was of a passionate nature, "she had never allowed herself to be carried away by his anger, so as to contradict him, either in word or act."‡ Nor, come what might, did she ever shake off the yoke of due subjection. Further, the holy woman was fond of inculcating the like submission on other matrons, her neighbours; and when these would, in familiar talk, complain of the wrong they suffered at their husbands' hands, she used to reply to them in words which might usefully be graven in letters of gold on the walls of the chamber of every married woman. She would say to them playfully, "When you heard the instrument of your marriage contract, you should not have looked upon it as making you the mistress, but the slave of that man whom you chose for your partner; and, therefore, mindful of your condition as slaves, you ought not to set yourselves up against your lords."§

266. As for the obedience due from servants to their masters, we may read what the Apostle prescribes in his Epistle to the Ephesians: *Servants, obey them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.*‖ By these last words he implies, that in their

in parentem hæreditatem maximam et divitias crederet. In Epitaph. Paulæ, ad Eustoch.

* Benignas, subditas viris suis.

† Ubi plenis annis nubilis facta est, tradita viro servivit veluti domino.

‡ Noverat hæc non resistere irato viro, non tantum factu, sed ne verbo quidem.

§ Veluti per jocum graviter admonens, ex quo illas tabulas, quæ matrimoniales vocantur, recitari audîssent, tamquam instrumenta, quibus ancillæ factæ essent, deputare debuissent; proinde memores conditionis superbire adversus dominos non oportere. Confess., lib. ix., cap. 9.

‖ Servite dominis carnalibus cum timore, et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri. Ephes. vj. 5.

various acts of service they should have the intention of doing God's will, which they work out by their obedience, rather than of pleasing the man whom they serve. And he holds forth to them, as the reward of such conduct, an everlasting inheritance.* Most praiseworthy was the obedience which Judith's handmaid rendered to her mistress.† This Princess having taken upon herself the hazardous task of beheading Holofernes who had invested the city of Bethulia with a formidable host, called upon her maid to accompany her to the enemy's camp. The handmaid did as she was ordered, and wholly intent on fulfilling the commands of her mistress, was nothing daunted at meeting the armed sentinels nor at beholding the fierce countenances and weapons of the soldiers. Still keeping close to Judith, she entered the tent of Holofernes. When the fatal blow was struck, at so fearful a risk, she was not terror-stricken; she fainted not, neither did she withdraw, but stood by her mistress and helped her in an action at once so difficult and dangerous. At length Judith gave into her hands the severed head of the General, with which she fearlessly passed through the serried ranks of the foe, bearing with her the damning proof of her guilt. This was surely admirable obedience in a timid, weak, and helpless handmaiden.

267. The obedience of laymen to Priests in all that regards their office is so rigorously insisted upon by God, that in the Old Law, He commands that the stubborn and contumacious should be put to death by the sentence of the judge.‡ Imperishable is the memory of the obedience paid by the Emperor Theodosius to the holy Archbishop Ambrose. After the massacre at Thessalonica, the Emperor came to Church with all the pomp and circumstance that befitted his exalted station. The great Prelate went forth to meet him on the threshold of the hallowed building,

* Obedite, sicut Christo, non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes: sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo: cum bonâ voluntate servientes, sicut Domino, et non hominibus, scientes quoniam unusquisque quodcumque fecerit bonum, hoc recipiet a Domino, sive servus, sive liber.

† Judith. x.

‡ Qui superbierit, nolens obedire sacerdotis imperio, qui eo tempore ministrat Domino Deo tuo, ex decreto judicis moriatur homo ille. Deut. xvij. 12.

and motioned him back with his pastoral staff, saying: "Emperor! with what face do you come to the Church, stained as you are with so much blood?" Theodosius replied that king David had been an adulterer and a murderer. The holy Bishop then made answer in these well-known words: "As thou hast followed him in his sin, so do thou imitate his repentance."* How think you did the Emperor behave in this encounter? He vented his anger neither on the saintly Pastor nor upon the holy place from which he saw himself excluded. He showed prompt obedience to the commands of the holy Archbishop, and, bowing his head, returned to his palace with his suite. He forbore to return to the Church until he had obtained the holy Prelate's permission, and had performed the penance, both public and private, laid upon him in expiation of his crime. Baronius, in relating this fact,† admires the heroic obedience of the youthful and victorious Prince, who was the master of the world, and with justice extols it above the obedience of the Consul Posthumius to the Pontiff Metellus, which is so famed in ancient history; for the Consul submitted out of regard to the Senate and the Roman people, while Theodosius had no superior or equal in the world who could claim his obedience. Hence the submission he paid to St. Ambrose could proceed only from his reverence for God, and for the priestly authority.

268. We may, therefore, conclude that obedience is a virtue proper not only to Religious in relation to their Superiors—as some people fancy—but incumbent on every Christian man towards each and every one who is lawfully set over him; and that as the Religious, by refusing to submit to the authority who may command him, is guilty of sin, so too does the Secular sin, in the like circumstances; for both the one and the other, by shaking off the yoke of due subjection, resist the ordinance of God, Who requires of us this subjection: as the Apostle of the Gentiles has more than once repeated.‡ I have only to add that the Religious, indeed, sins more grievously, on account of the especial obligation which

* Qui secutus es errantem, sequere pœnitentem.

† Tom. iv., A.D. 390.

‡ Qui potestati resistit, Dei ordinationi resistit. Ad Rom. xiij. 2.

he has contracted by his free and deliberate vow of obedience. But the present Article is fitly addressed to all classes of persons, though it may especially concern those who strive with somewhat of earnestness after Christian perfection.

269. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to set a certain limitation to the foregoing teaching. It is this: The precept of a lawful Superior is an object of obedience, excluding only the supposition that it be plainly at variance with the commandments of God; for if he that is in authority (as the Angelic Doctor says) commands one thing, and God commands the contrary, it is obvious that we ought to make no account of the command of the human Superior, and obey alone the law of the Most High.* Neither are subjects obliged to obey Superiors in the choice of a state of life, as, for instance, in determining between the married and the celibate state; since God has left each one at liberty herein, and will have us obey Himself only, and follow the leading of His inspirations. This is the teaching of the same holy Doctor.†

270. We may confirm this doctrine by the authority of Pope Gregory the Great, who relates in his Dialogues,‡ that there was in the city of Spoleto a noble young lady, of marriageable age, the daughter of one of the chief citizens, who had determined to keep her virginity intact, despite the will of her father, who wished to give her in marriage. And as, hearkening rather to the voice of God than to her parent's threats, she remained firm in her resolve, her indignant father disinherited her, depriving her of her fortune, and leaving her nothing but the half of a small field, which could hardly afford a miserable sustenance. She, setting greater store on the peerless treasure of her virginity than on all her father's wealth, took the religious habit. Now one day, while she was conversing with St. Eleutherius, the farmer

* Si aliud imperator, aliud Deus jubeat, contempto illo, obtemperandum est Deo. 2, 2, quæst. 105, art. 5.

† Non tenentur nec servi dominis, nec filii parentibus obedire de matrimonio contrahendo, vel virginitate servandâ, aut aliquo alio hujusmodi: sed in his, quæ pertinent ad dispositionem actuum, vel rerum humanarum, tenetur subditus suo superiori obedire secundum rationem superioritatis. Ibid.

‡ Lib. i., cap. 21.

who tilled this piece of land came up, and brought her some present. On this occasion, it pleased God to show, by an unmistakable token, how acceptable to Him was the choice this good young maiden had made of the virginal life, in defiance of the anger of her father; for the Almighty allowed the devil to possess the hind, who began to utter horrible yells and to roll about in hideous contortions. The maiden then being endowed with a power above nature, commanded the demon to depart forthwith. The evil spirit feeling himself driven out by an irresistible force, answered by the mouth of the possessed man: "If I depart, whither am I to go?" There chanced to be a young pig close by; so the maiden bade him go into this. The demon then left the peasant and entered into the brute, which he slew directly, as the Saint relates.*

CHAPTER II.

THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE NOT ONLY FOR A MORAL AND PERFECT LIFE, BUT FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORDER.

271. If we consider attentively the structure of this great machine of the universe, we shall plainly see that its existence is preserved by the subordination of one part to another. The heavens depend on the *primum mobile*, from which they receive their motion; the planets depend on the sun, whence they derive their light and their power of exercising influence; sublunary bodies are subordinate to the planets, from which they gather their various influences, whether beneficial or untoward; and all the several bodies beneath the sphere of the moon, which compose our earth, show order and dependence one upon the other, as effects depending upon their causes. Take away from the world this superiority and consequent dependence of being, and the universe will no longer present a

* Tunc sanctimonialis fœmina præcepit, dicens: Exi ab eo et in hunc porcum ingredere. Qui statim de homine exivit, porcum, quem jussus fuerat, invasit, occidit et recessit.

spectacle which charms every eye that beholds it, and ravishes every mind that contemplates it. It would relapse into primal shapeless chaos, and would appear a huge disordered medley, producing horror in the mind; in short, the world would no longer be the world.

272. Now the very superiority and subordination of bodies, which is of such importance for the preservation of this visible universe, is no less necessary—as St. Thomas observes—for the maintenance of the civil world, that is, of the human commonwealth. In order for this to subsist, it is absolutely necessary that some should, as superiors, regulate the actions of others; while others, as subjects, should submit to the control of those on whom they depend: it must perforce be that some command, while others obey. There is no other way by which human actions can proceed with order and justice, or by which states, kingdoms and empires can show forth that regular harmony which so befits any gathering of reasonable beings. Do away with this dependence of one man on his fellow, and civil society would speedily become a mere collection of wild beasts. For as each one would be able to live according to his whim, the towns and provinces would teem with injustice, cruelty, disorder, strife and the most degrading brutality; as is the case in those remote regions of America, where the natives, scattered over the vast wilderness, live according to their own caprice. So that it is no less necessary that there should exist in the world authority duly exercised, and a corresponding faithful subordination to it, than it is imperative that men should live as men and not like brute beasts. This is in substance the teaching of St. Thomas, though the terms which he uses are not identical.*

273. The abominable confusion that would infallibly result

* Oportet autem in rebus naturalibus, ut superiora moveant inferiora ad suas actiones per excellentiam naturalis virtutis collatæ divinitus. Unde etiam oportet in rebus humanis, quod superiores moveant inferiores per suam voluntatem ex vi voluntatis divinitus ordinatæ. Movere autem per rationem et voluntatem, est præcipere: et ideo sicut ex ipso ordine naturali divinitus instituto inferiora necesse habent subdi motioni superiorum; ita etiam in rebus humanis ex ordine juris naturalis et divini, tenentur inferiores suis superioribus obedire. 2, 2, quæst. 104, art. 1, in corp.

were the authority of those who govern and the obedience of subjects to be done away with, is aptly described by St. John Chrysostom, by comparisons most suitably chosen and adapted to the meanest understanding. "Take away from a band of musicians," writes the Saint, "the leader of the band, and at once the music will be changed into a hideous discord. Take from the army its general, and it can no longer be styled a multitude of soldiers in battle-array, but a mass of men destined for the shambles. Remove the pilot from the ship, and it will become the sport of the winds and waves. Take the shepherd away from the flock, and it is scattered." Now the same holds good of the political state, and much more so of the spiritual and religious life. If you banish from a commonwealth the Prince who governs, you will forthwith see it filled with violence, oppression, cruelties, injustice and abominations. If you remove from a household the master who rules over it, all will soon be disorder and confusion. Take from a Religious Community its Superior, and observance will before long fall into decay, and education vanish. If you deprive a devout person of his guide and director, you will soon see him wander from the straight path of perfection.

274. But if in every action, whether in the civil, social, or supernatural order, there be such need of the presence of a Superior, who may by his orders duly regulate all, how much the more necessary in all these things will be the obedience of subjects to those set over them; since without this obedience, Superiors are of little use, and disorder will be only greater than if there were no one to command? We will return to the comparisons heretofore made, in order to set this truth in its utmost evidence. Suppose that in a choir there be a leader, but that the singers take no notice of the time he beats; suppose that in an army there be a general, but that the troops obey him not; or that a ship have an able pilot on board whose commands the sailors will not follow; or that a flock have a watchful shepherd whose voice the sheep refuse to hear; no question but that in these instances the music, the battle-array, the flock, the ship, will be in greater disorder than if there were no superintendent and controller of

each of the several things above mentioned. The very same applies to a commonwealth, a household, a Religious Institute, a Confessional even; if while there are Superiors to set things in order by their commands, the subjects refuse them obedience. The disorder will only be greater than if there were no Superior at all; because commands which are slighted can only give rise to greater and more guilty disorders, since these result from the free-will of contumacious subjects.

275. All this is the opinion of the holy Father quoted above.* So the reader may see how necessary is obedience for the acquirement of perfection, since without it there cannot only be no spiritual life, but not even civil society. Hence St. Augustine might well say that nothing can be more just than that we should obey first, God our Supreme Lord; then men—masters, fathers, husbands, or any others who have received from God authority to command.†

CHAPTER III.

OBEDIENCE IS THE MOST EXCELLENT OF THE MORAL VIRTUES.

276. Let us not start with a misunderstanding. I say not that obedience is that one among the Moral Virtues which is most noble in its origin. It is already proved, as we have heretofore

* Malum quidem est, ubi nullus est principatus: et multarum cladium hæc res existet occasio, et est confusionis turbationisque principium. Sicut enim si ex choro ipsum principem auferas, nequaquam modulatus chorus existit: et militum phalanx, si ducem non habeat, nullo modo acies ordinata procedit: et navis si gubernatore privetur, pessum eat est necesse: et si gregi pastorem abstuleris, cunctus dispergitur. Malum autem non minus est inobedientia eorum, qui reguntur a principe. Populus enim, si non obsequitur principi, similis est populo principem non habenti; immo etiam deterior: illi quidem saltem veniam habent pro eo quod indisposite, et inordinate versantur, siquidem ordinatione privati sunt; hi autem veniam non merentur, quin etiam puniuntur. Homil. 34, in Epist. ad Hebræos.

† Nihil enim tam expedit animæ quam obedire. Et si expedit animæ obedire in servo ut obediat domino, in filio ut obediat patri, in uxore ut obediat viro; quanto magis in homine ut obediat Deo? In Psal. lxxix., Conc. 2.

seen, that the roots from which the Moral Virtues spring are the Cardinal Virtues, which may hence justly claim the primacy of origin, when we are treating of the whole range of morally good actions. I only assert that the surpassing excellence of obedience is due to a certain inborn and native splendour, by which it shines conspicuous above all other virtues. This is affirmed by St. Thomas, who proves it by a cogent reason. Manifold are the blessings by which God's goodness has enriched us. There are the goods of fortune, such as wealth, affluence, and honours, which concur from without to our happiness here below. There are the goods of nature, which contribute from within to our contentment. Such are, health, vigour, beauty, and the pleasures of sense as regards the body; as regards the soul, such are memory, understanding, and a will well disposed to act in full conformity to reason. Among the many benefits wherewith God has laden us in this mortal life, the goods of the body are not of much account, still less are the advantages of fortune to be esteemed, but the spiritual endowments of the soul, as being the most conformable to man's nature, are to be highly valued; and the chief of these is the free use of our own will, which rules as queen over the miniature world within us, and enables us to use and enjoy all other goods whereof we are capable. Now, this same will, which is the chief good we possess, we give up to God when, for His sake, we submit to do the will of one set over us, and by thus doing we make Him the greatest offering in our power, and pay Him the greatest homage of which we are capable. By means of the other virtues we despoil ourselves for God's sake of goods of less price; by obedience we yield up to Him our most precious endowment.* The Saint repeats the same elsewhere, saying, that man can make no offering so pleasing to God as that of his own will, by subject-

* Tria sunt genera bonorum humanorum, quæ homo potest contemnere propter Deum: quorum infimum sunt exteriora bona; medium autem sunt bona corporis; supremum autem sunt bona animæ, inter quæ quodammodo præcipuum est voluntas, in quantum scilicet per voluntatem homo omnibus aliis bonis utitur. Et ideo per se laudabilior est obedientiæ virtus, quæ propter Deum contemnit propriam voluntatem, quam aliæ virtutes morales, quæ propter Deum aliqua alia bona contemnunt. 2, 2, quæst. 104, art. 3.

ing it, for God's sake, to the will of another. This is an offering of such value that it cannot be equalled.*

277. But obedience has another quality which causes it to shine with a special splendour, for when it is implanted in the soul it brings in with it every other virtue; and if it abide in the soul, it maintains them all in vigour; while if it reign in the soul, it changes everything into virtue, not excepting that which of its own nature is not virtue. Nor am I the first to ascribe such excellent properties to holy obedience. St. Augustine has gone before me in this path, since he calls obedience the mother and, as it were, the trusty guardian, of every virtue in the human soul.† And to this St. Gregory adds, that it is the mother of every virtue, since it begets them all in the soul; and it is their guardian also, because it preserves them all.‡ Nor is it difficult to assign the reason why obedience is so fruitful a parent of every virtuous deed; for, as every sin we commit and every fault into which we fall spring from the evil use of our will, so every virtuous act proceeds from our making a right use of our will. Now, it is unquestionable that he who is always obedient and submits to the commands and counsels of others, ever makes a right use of his will; hence he invariably acts in conformity with virtue, nay, continues in the uninterrupted exercise of all the virtues. No wonder then, that he acquires them and keeps them when acquired. So that the Apostle might well say that sin and all evil had found an entrance into this world through disobedience, while, through obedience, on the contrary, all good had been recovered. He is alluding to the disobedience of Adam, which brought ruin upon his race, and to the obedience of Christ, which was destined to restore to us salvation and perfection.§

278. It may hence be inferred, that though obedience, as we

* Nihil majus potest homo dare Deo, quam quod propriam voluntatem propter ipsum voluntati alterius subjiciat. 2, 2, quæst. 106, art. 5, ad 5.

† Virtus, quæ in naturâ rationali mater quodammodo est omnium, custosque virtutum. De Civ. Dei, lib. xiv. cap. 12.

‡ Sola virtus est obedientia, quæ virtutes ceteras menti inserit, insertasque custodit. Moral., lib. xxxv. cap. 10.

§ Sicut enim per inobedientiam unius hominis peccatores constituti sunt multi; ita per unius obeditionem justi constituentur multi. Ad Rom. v. 19.

have observed, draws its origin from the Cardinal Virtues, yet in a certain sense they are its offspring, and it may justly claim to be at once both the mother and daughter of these virtues. I will make my meaning clear. Obedience depends on prudence, because he cannot obey aright who is wanting in prudence to discern whether the order given to him should be obeyed as being lawful, under the actual circumstances; or if he should not rather reject it, as unlawful and sinful. But of such prudence, obedience is, so to speak, the foster-mother, since no prudence can be greater than not to trust one's self, but rather to act according to the views of him who is set over us, and is specially assisted by God in his decisions. Obedience is, likewise, subordinate to justice, in that it renders to those in authority what belongs to them of right—that is, a prompt compliance with their behests. But it is, moreover, the stay of justice, as whoever obeys aright will never wrong his neighbours, nor violate their just claims. The same applies to temperance and fortitude, which foster obedience, by rendering us submissive to the orders of others, giving us courage to perform them; but, at the same time, they are, in their turn, nurtured by perfect obedience which, by its very exercise, moderates and tempers the natural bent of man to follow his own judgment and do his own will, making him ready to undertake arduous and perilous enterprises. Therefore may I infer that obedience implants all other virtues in the soul, fosters and matures them all, as the Saints have said, including even those compared with which it is in a state of dependence and subordination.

279. The holy Virgin Euphrosyne will help us to illustrate this truth.* Burning with the desire to lead an austere and penitential life, she went, disguised as a man, to one of the monasteries in the environs of Alexandria, where sanctity was most flourishing, and prostrating herself at the feet of the Abbot, earnestly craved to be admitted into the fellowship of those saintly monks. Being taken for what she appeared to be, she attained her request, and put on the holy habit, the name given her being Smaraldus. But as nature had gifted her with exceeding beauty, and a peculiar

* Surius, Januarii, Die 1.

gracefulness betrayed itself in all her movements, she drew upon herself the eyes of all the brethren and became, without fault on her part, an occasion of distressing temptations. The Abbot having been informed of this, commanded her never to leave her poor, narrow cell, but to remain therein in devout exercises. Euphrosyne complied with the superior's order, and remained constant for thirty-eight entire years in so rigid an obedience, as never once to set foot outside her cell. At last she died, and at her death revealed the secret she had so carefully kept hid in her lifetime; for calling to her side her sorrowing father who had never ceased to seek after his lost child, she discovered to him that she was his daughter Euphrosyne; having revealed which, she breathed her last. Now, while the monks stood around her holy corpse, struck with wonder at so singular an occurrence, and filled with admiration at her heroic obedience in remaining throughout so many years shut up within the narrow prison of her cell, a monk, who had lost the sight of an eye, reverentially bowed down to kiss the pallid limbs of the departed virgin. At the contact of those hallowed members, he all at once recovered the sight he had lost, to the great astonishment of the bystanders. Thus was God pleased to give a public and unmistakable token of the holiness of His servant, and after death to cover with glory in the eyes of the Community and of the whole world, one who in her lifetime had hidden herself from every eye. Meanwhile, we may reflect in what way Euphrosyne attained such eminent sanctity, since she had no share in the common life of the monks in the labours and austerities of the Community. It was none other than the continual obedience she practised within the narrow compass of a poor cell. By omitting out of obedience what the rest of the Community meritoriously performed, she acquired all the virtues more fully than the rest, and reached sooner than they the summit of a sublime perfection.

280. But nothing can impress us more deeply with this most important truth than what Dorotheus relates of his holy disciple Dositheus.* The latter was but little fitted for the austerities of Religious Life, as not only had he been luxuriously brought up

* Ex Doctr. 1. S. Doroth. De Renúnt.

at home but, being of a gentle disposition, and having a delicate constitution as well as a weak frame, he was in nowise strong enough to bear such a burden. He resolved, nevertheless, from the first day of his entrance into the monastery, to consecrate himself entirely to holy obedience, judging that this was a virtue most suited to his feeble constitution, as it required bending of the will, and not a robust frame. For which reason he placed himself in the hands of his master Dorotheus, putting off all self-will; even as a babe reposes in its mother's arms. The counsels, the desires, nay the slightest nod of the superior, were for the disciple the rule and guide of every action, down to the minutest. And by these means he attained such perfection in religious virtue, that he was seen after death to equal in glory those monks who had led the most austere and penitential lives. So true is what St. Augustine says, that obedience is the fruitful mother of every virtue, and the guardian that preserves to each its vigour.

281. I will add that obedience imparts the lustre of virtue to actions which of themselves are indifferent. Eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, working, talking, recreation, are actions in themselves indifferent and have no claim to be considered virtuous; but when done out of obedience, they become virtuous; they are rendered even supernatural, meritorious, and deserving of an everlasting reward. Hence, we may say of obedience that it is a Midas, and no fabled one either, since it changes whatever it touches into the priceless gold of virtue. Nor is the profitable transformation which it brings about confined to the bronze of works which of their own nature are indifferent; it extends even to the tin and baser metal of those which of themselves are vile, trivial, fruitless, and vain. What man will not admire the trouble taken by Abbot John, who for a whole year watered a dry stick, and strove with intense effort to remove an immense block of stone, in compliance with the orders of his superior?* Who does not consider such actions highly virtuous and praiseworthy? Who is there who will refuse to extol them? Yet taken by themselves, they are useless labour and vain effort. Who but applauds the

* Cassian, Inst., lib. iv., cap. 25.

trouble taken by Paul the Simple, when, in obedience to his Superior, he repeatedly sewed and ripped up again the same seams, drew water from the well merely to spill it on the ground, and performed many other useless tasks?* Now, if we consider these actions merely by themselves, they would rightly be believed trifling rather than virtuous.

282. A prodigy, left on record by Sulpicius Severus, will supply an apt illustration of the point which we are treating.† There came to one of the holy monasteries of Egypt, a youth desirous to devote himself entirely to God's service. The Abbot asked him whether he was ready to deny his own will, and to do whatever he might be told. He replied that he was ready for everything. The Abbot then stuck in the ground a withered twig of the storax tree, which he chanced to be holding in his hands, and ordered the young man to go and fetch water from the Nile, which was two miles distant, and to supply the twig with the water of this river, until it should have struck deep root into the earth and begun to put forth leaves. He bowed, and set himself to the task, and continued for a year to go backwards and forwards to the river, with a heavy load of water, panting under the charge like a beast of burden. The twig giving no sign of life, he continued his labour another year, and another after that; walking no less than four miles in all, there and back, on each occasion that he went to draw water. Before we proceed, let the reader imagine that he had been an eye-witness of this fact; that with his own eyes he had beheld the monk straining under his heavy load of water, moistening the road with his sweat, and then spilling the water he had so laboriously drawn, on a withered, dried-up twig! What opinion would he form of the holy man? Would he not conclude that he was out of his mind, and laugh at him as an idiot and a lunatic? Nor would he be far wrong, if we consider the action in itself; but because it was begun and carried through with constancy, from the sole motive of obedience, not only was it not purposeless or foolish, it was wise and holy; and it pleased God to manifest, by a signal miracle, how acceptable it was in

* Ex Vitis PP. In Vitâ Pauli Simplicis.

† In Dialog.—De Virt. S. Martini, cap. 13.

His sight; for at the close of the third year the twig struck root and began to put forth leaves, and by insensible degrees its trunk thickened and divided into branches, and it remained covered with foliage to the admiration of all beholders: an unmistakable proof of the great principle that there is no work, be it never so abject, frivolous, useless, vile and purposeless, which, if performed out of obedience, does not become virtuous, godly, supernatural and meritorious. The historian we are quoting bears witness that he had seen with his own eyes in the courtyard of the monastery this self-same shrub, covered with leaves and blossoms, in proof of the relation which he had heard.*

283. Relying on this solid foundation, the Egyptian monks, as Cassian relates, flew to execute the commands of their Superiors, as if they were orders from above, without examining whether the task assigned them were possible or impossible, useful or useless. Nay, they undertook, at times, to do even impossibilities, with such faith, alacrity and devotion, that it never occurred to them to question the feasibility of what was commanded.† Therefore, we may well call obedience the true philosopher's stone, since it can thus change into the purest gold of true and solid virtue the chaff and husk found in actions of abject nature, and in works of no utility. The reader may now determine whether among moral virtues there be one endowed with the peerless prerogative of adorning the man with all the virtues, of preserving them all in their integrity and vigour, and even of perfecting the soul by means of works which in themselves are indifferent and vile; and whether he should not be at once enamoured of holy obedience: although we have not yet exhausted the praises of this virtue.

* Ego ipsam ex illâ virgulâ arbusculam, quæ hodieque intra atrium monasterii est, ramis viridantibus vidi, quæ quasi in testimonium manet, quantum obedientia meruit, et quantum fides possit ostendit.

† Sic universa complere quæcumque fuerint ab eo (nempe superiore) præcepta, tamquam a Deo sint cœlitus edita, sine ullâ discussione festinant, ut nonnumquam etiam impossibilia sibimet imperata eâ fide ac devotione suscipiant, ut totâ virtute, ac sine ullâ cordis hæsitatione ea perficere, et consumere nitantur: et nec possibilitatem quidem præcepti præ senioris reverentiâ metiantur. Instit., lib. iv., cap. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER PREROGATIVES OF OBEDIENCE, WHEREBY IT IS SHOWN TO EXCEL EVERY OTHER VIRTUE.

284. We have hitherto seen, that with obedience all other virtues are acquired; it remains for us to show, that if we lose it, we lose all the others along with it. Let us begin with the virtue of religion, unquestionably one of the most illustrious of all the virtues. King Saul returned victorious from the rout of the Amalekites; but in contravention to the command of God, Whose will was that he should utterly destroy the flocks and herds as well as the inhabitants of Amalek, Saul brought with him droves of rams and oxen, with a view of offering, at least, part of them in sacrifice to Almighty God. This was assuredly an act of worship and of religion, whereby the king intended to ascribe to the Most High the glory of his victories. Notwithstanding this, the Prophet Samuel came before him with angry mien, and thus loudly rebuked him: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord?* *Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*"† Thus the reader will perceive that the offerings and sacrifices of Saul, and the several religious acts he had proposed to himself, were valueless in God's sight because they were disjoined from obedience.

285. But here a delicate question presents itself, which will have occurred to the reader's mind in the course of the foregoing Chapters. The virtue of religion (as we have shown elsewhere) is the most noble of the Moral Virtues, since its object is the due worship of the Most High. Obedience is less noble, as its sole object is a command, whether imposed by God, or by one who holds His place. How then can we claim for obedience precedence over a virtue which traces its origin to a far nobler

* Numquid vult Dominus holocausta, et victimas, et non potius ut obediatur voci Domini?

† Melior est enim obedientia quam victimæ, et auscultare magis, quam offerre adipem arietum. I Reg. xv. 22.

stock? Cornelius à Lapide meets this objection by saying, that religion is the more illustrious virtue, for the reason alleged; but nevertheless, practically, obedience is in reality and absolutely the better virtue; as the former is a virtue having in it something arbitrary, while obedience is a necessary virtue. To make to God devout offerings and to lay them on His altars, depends more or less on the discretion of Him who presents the offering; but obedience depends on the necessity of the precept which binds us to perform the act.*

286. I am, however, more pleased with the view taken by St. Gregory in commenting on the words of Samuel quoted above. He says: "Obedience is better than sacrifice, because it too is a sacrifice, and one of a much more perfect nature; for in the sacrifices immolated at the Altar the flesh of oxen and heifers is offered, while in the sacrifice presented by holy obedience self-will is slain with the knife of mortification. Hence," he adds, "this latter description of sacrifice is much more acceptable to God, and more availing to appease Him; as our will, restraining the pride of its own conceits, immolates itself instead of brute beasts before God's sight, with the sword of the commandment to which it submits."†

287. St. Jerome is of one mind with St. Gregory where, putting the following words into God's mouth, he says: "I want not thy offerings, nor do I seek thy incense: I require of thee obedience, which is a true sacrifice, the perfect oblation, whereof the Royal Prophet speaks when he says, 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, a will humble and bowing down before the commands of others.'"‡ We may gather herefrom, that according to the mind

* Religio in se melior, majorque est virtus quam sit obedientia. Obedientia tamen dicitur melior, quia magis necessaria, et in praxi præponenda religioni. Quod enim Deus jussit, hoc absolute faciendum est, eique obediendum: actus vero religionis, et victimæ, et sacrificia, sunt liberi: quare obedientiæ cedant oportet. In Text. Cit.

† Obedientia victimis jure præponitur, quia per victimas aliena caro, per obedientiam vero voluntas propria mactatur. Tanto igitur quisque Deum citius placat, quanto ante ejus oculos, repressâ arbitrii sui superbiâ, gladio præcepti se immolat. Moral., lib. xxxv., cap. 10.

‡ Non exigo a te oblationes, nec thura quæsivi. . . . sed obedientiam, quæ

of the holy Fathers, obedience rendered for God's sake is one of the most illustrious acts of religion, and that the other acts of religion, unless in conformity with it, lose all their lustre.

288. Watchings, long and severe fasts, and tears of compunction, are virtues no less arduous than meritorious; but they have to yield the palm to obedience. The same St. Gregory, explaining in another place the words of Samuel above quoted, teaches, that "to submit one's will invariably to that of another, is beyond compare more sublime than to wear ourselves out by rigorous fastings, to melt in devout affections, to immolate ourselves by inward compunction on the altar of prayer;" and he adds, that "whoever shall have perfectly obeyed the will of his Director, will have precedence in glory over all devout penitents, and obtain a higher rank in our heavenly home."*

289. Lastly, St. Thomas closes this subject by laying down the general principle that no act of virtue, not even the distribution to the poor of all that we have, nor martyrdom itself, can be meritorious apart from obedience.† So true it is, as I showed at the beginning, that, failing obedience, every supernatural virtue is lost, spiritual life languishes and is extinguished. For, as St. Gregory remarks, "Every good work should be looked upon as of less account than the things which we do because we are commanded to do them."‡

290. I may put this in clearer evidence, by means of a fact

est sacrificium, de quo David: *Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus.* Psal. l. 19.

* *Melior est obedientia quam victimæ et auscultare quam offerre arietum adipem;* quia longe altioris est meriti propriam voluntatem alienæ semper voluntati subjicere, quam magnis iejuniis corpus atterere, ac per compunctionem se in secretiori sacrificio mactare. Quid est enim adeps arietum, nisi pinguis et interna devotio electoris? Adipem ergo arietum offert, qui in studio secretæ conversationis devotæ orationis affectum habet. *Melior est autem obedientia quam victimæ*, et *quam offerre adipem arietum:* quia qui perfecte voluntatem præceptoris sui implere didicit, in cœlesti regno et abstinentibus, et flentibus excellit. Lib. vj. in I Reg., cap. 15.

† Si quis etiam martyrium sustineret, vel omnia sua pauperibus erogaret; nisi hæc ordinaret ad impletionem divinæ voluntatis, quæ recte ad obedientiam pertinet, meritoria esse non possent. 2, 2, quæst. 104, art. 3.

‡ Ut supra.

which fits in well with my purpose. In the city of Paderborn, in Germany, there lived a Religious of holy life, who had the superintendence of a convent of consecrated virgins. He continually meditated on, and perfectly kept, the law of God; he was well-known for his charity, lowly in his humble-mindedness, remarkable for his chastity; and as a trusty paranymph and faithful friend of the Heavenly Bridegroom, he guarded with watchful care and zeal the chastity and regular observance of the spouses committed to his care.* To complete this panegyric, I will only add, that he cherished within him a most tender devotion to the Queen of Heaven. This good Religious, after a life thus spent in holiness, was seized with a violent fever, which brought him to death's door. While on the point of dying, he was rapt in ecstasy, wherein God discovered to him many of His hidden things, and the Virgin Mary favoured him with her presence. But, strange to say, when at last the vision came to a close, the dying man seemed to the Prioress and to certain of the more aged nuns who were present to have an overcast countenance, disquiet and grief being depicted on his features, and words of lamentation being heard proceeding from his lips. They inquired the cause of this great perturbation. He replied that the Queen of Heaven had indeed appeared to him, but, in punishment of an act of disobedience, of which he had been guilty in days gone by, she had not taken him up with her to the joys of Paradise. The Prioress asked him whether he had ever confessed this shortcoming, and he answered that he had indeed frequently accused himself of it at the Sacred Tribunal; but that his contrition had never been sufficient to free him wholly from the guilt of his transgression, and he had been left to mourn over it much longer in this vale of tears. On hearing this, the nuns were amazed, and conceived a high esteem of holy obedience, as they saw that all the eminent virtues of this monk availed not to hasten his entrance into his heavenly home, so much

* Et homo ille, mandatorum Dei scrutator sedulus, et executor devotus, clarus caritate, humilitate submissus, castitate præcipuus, et qui tamquam fidelis paranymphus et amicus Sponsi, sponsarum Domini sui sibi commissarum castitatem pervigili sollicitudine zelabat. Spec. Exempl.,—Dist. 3, Exempl. 49.

as a single act of disobedience did to delay it; just as, in the case of Saul, the blamelessness of his whole former life was far less effectual in maintaining him on the throne, than his disobedience was in bringing about his deposition.

291. But there is further ground on which obedience may claim the foremost place amid the moral virtues; because this virtue, more than all others, renders us impregnable to every assault of our hellish foes, and invincible by their temptations. As all know, our life here below is a truceless warfare with the devils.* They never allow us peace nor breathing-time; their sole care is to hinder by their suggestions the practice of virtue, and, by the motions they incite within us, to urge us on to the opposite vices. Who can hope to overcome such formidable foes? Solomon replies: *The obedient man shall speak of victories* † over the whole host of hell, and having overcome all his foes, shall remain unmoved in that degree of perfection which he has attained by the help of divine grace. St. Gregory supplies us with the reason. The devils are proud and haughty spirits, and can be overcome only by lowly submission to those that stand in the place of God. By means of the other virtues we resist them; by obedience alone do we rule over them and bring them into subjection.‡ And experience abundantly shows, that nothing avails so much to enable us to get the better of our temptations, as to lay bare our souls to our Directors and to follow exactly their prescriptions. On the other hand, to seek to guide ourselves by our own whims, is to surrender at once and give ourselves up as conquered.

292. The great Macarius, standing one day at the entrance of his cell, saw the devil coming along the path in human shape, clad in a garment with openings on every side, from each of which there hung a small phial. The Abbot inquired whither he was

* Militia est vita hominis super terram. Job. vij. 1.

† Vir obediens loquetur victoriam. Prov. xxj. 28.

‡ Cum hominibus pro Deo subjicimur, superbos spiritus superamus. Ceteris quidem virtutibus dæmones impugnamus, per obedientiam vincimus. Victores ergo sunt qui obediunt: quia dum voluntatem suam aliis perfecte subjiciunt, ipsis lapsis per inobedientiam angelis dominantur. Lib. iv. in I Reg., cap. 10.

going, and what was the meaning of all these phials dangling around him? The devil replied, "I am going to tempt the monks, and these phials contain divers mixtures which I use as baits; for, as the bodily palate has its likes and dislikes, so too do souls differ in their tastes." The Abbot proceeded to question him whether, among so many monks who dwelt in that vast wilderness, he had any friends? "I have one," answered the evil spirit, "who does just as I like, and is caught by every bait I put in his way." Being asked by the saintly Abbot to tell the monk's name, he replied that it was Theopentus. On hearing this, Macarius hastened to the cell of this imperfect monk, and found that the wretched man refused to open his mind to any one, followed nobody's advice, but lived according to his own fancy. But, what was worse, when being questioned by his Abbot as to his inward state, he artfully evaded all inquiries and concealed the truth in several ways. But Macarius contrived so to win his confidence by his humble and gentle bearing, that he drew forth the avowal of his shortcomings, warned him, and supplying him with the means of defending himself against the temptations of the devil, left him with the satisfaction of having completed his task. Some days later, as Macarius was wending his way through the woods, the evil spirit appeared to him in the same guise as before. The Abbot again began to inquire as to the behaviour of the Brethren. "It is bad," replied the fiend; "they are all saints; and, what is worse, that very monk who was so friendly and so obedient to me, has become, I know not wherefore, mine enemy. He will no longer do as I like; he is more saintly than the others." And the demon swore that he would leave the desert, since all his trouble went for nothing.*

293. We may plainly perceive from this, that if a man will submit in obedience, and be guided by the advice of others, he will speedily baffle all the snares and assaults of the devils that attack him, and will soon grow strong in virtue. While, on the other hand, he needs only to shake off the yoke of subjection and obedience, and he becomes a prey to his enemies, feeble, imperfect and liable to grievous falls. Wherefore if it be true that all

* E Lib. Doct. PP.—De Provid., n. 11.

virtues may be acquired by means of obedience, that all are preserved by it, that without it all will be lost, that by its heavenly power it can render deeds holy and meritorious which of themselves are not such; we must needs conclude that he is careless of his own advancement who values not obedience, who is not enamoured of it, and who does not force himself to practise it at whatever cost.

CHAPTER V.

THE THREE DEGREES TO WHICH OBEDIENCE MUST ASCEND IN ORDER TO ITS PERFECTION. THE PRESENT CHAPTER WILL TREAT OF THE FIRST.

294. OBEDIENCE, which, as we have heretofore seen, is a virtue so necessary and in itself so noble, must, in order that it may be perfect, ascend three steps, which are the three stages of perfection which render it wholly finished and complete. First, we must obey with promptitude; next, with single-mindedness; and in the third place, cheerfully. We will begin with the first. Some authors assign as the first degree of this virtue the outward performance of the work enjoined. But if the inferior does what is desired of him with reluctance, with unwilling heart, with inward trouble, with outward murmuring against him who has given the command, and, so to speak, with halting pace, as a beast that is being dragged to the shambles, I cannot but think that so imperfect a mode of execution wears the appearance of vice, and is destitute of the lustre of virtue. This is the opinion of St. Bernard. "If," he writes, "you receive a command with unwillingness, murmuring, and complaint, you do not practise the virtue of obedience, even though you do what is enjoined. We must say rather that beneath the external action you cloak the interior malice of your heart. Because, when others behold the external performance of the work, they will consider you obedient, while in reality you are not

so."* In order, then, that the outward performance of what obedience enjoins may attain the first degree of perfection, it is requisite that it be united to a will both disposed and ready to obey; and if the inferior part suggest difficulties, and interpose repugnances—as may often happen on account of our frailty—the will must generously overcome all and apply the hands to the task. In a word, we may say with St. Paul, that we should *obey with good will, as to the Lord and not to man:* not with a reluctant and restive will.†

295. The same St. Bernard, having depicted for us the obedience of a reluctant, lukewarm and imperfect will, presents the picture of of a will prompt in obeying. "The truly obedient man," he says, "knows nothing of dallying, delay and slowness; he anticipates the commands of his Superior, keeps his eyes on the alert for his slightest signal, his ears open to his every whisper, his hands ready to work, his feet to run, and remains with his mind ever intent, being ready to carry out another's will.‡ He illustrates this by the example of Zaccheus, of whom Christ required a perfect obedience, when He said to him, *Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down.*§ The Apostle likewise showed the same prompt obedience, when, at a simple summons of our Redeemer, *Come after Me—follow Me*—without hesitation, without delay, they attached themselves to Him to be His disciples and trusty servants, even unto death.

296. And while on this subject, I cannot pass without mention

* Hæc si moleste cœperis sustinere, si dijudicare prælatum, si murmurare in corde, etiamsi exterius impleas quod jubetur, non est virtus patientiæ, sed velamentum malitiæ. Serm. 3 De Circumcis.

† Cum bonâ voluntate servientes, sicut Deo, et non hominibus. Ad Ephes. vj. 7.

‡ Fidelis obediens nescit moras, fugit crastinum, ignorat tarditatem, prævenit præcipientem, parat oculos visui, aures auditui, linguam voci, manus operi, itineri pedes, totum se colligit, ut imperantis colligat voluntatem. Serm. De Virt. Obed.

§ Vide Dominum festinanter præcipientem, et hominem festinanter obedientem. *Zachæe* inquit, *festinans descende, quia hodie in domo tuâ oportet me manere: et festinans descendit et excepit eum gaudens.*

the example set by Mark, the Solitary, who truly imitated the disciples of Christ in his readiness to obey, if not the voice of Christ Himself, at least the behests of those who held the place of our Lord.* Mark was greatly beloved by the Abbot Sylvanus, more than all the other monks, on account of his singular obedience. This preference occasioned envy in the hearts of all, and furnished them matter for complaints and murmurings, as is but too often the case in Communities. These complaints reached the ears of the elder monks, who dwelt in the neighbouring monasteries: they therefore met together and came to the monastery of Sylvanus, in order to inquire into the cause of his marked preference, and to administer to him a brotherly rebuke, should they discover that it was in anywise excessive. Abbot Sylvanus went forth to meet them, and received them kindly; and having learned the reason of their coming, contented himself with leading them around the cells of all his monks, and knocking at every door, he said with a loud voice, "Ho! Brother, come forth, I have need of you." At this summons, none of the monks stirred, but Mark alone at once came forth, and presented himself to receive his Superior's orders. Sylvanus then, turning to the venerable elders, said, "And the other monks, where are they?" Then entering with them into Mark's cell, they found that he had been engaged in writing when the Abbot called him, and that at the first sound of his voice, he had left a letter of a word unfinished. These venerable old men being struck with admiration at beholding such punctual obedience to the Superior's call, said to Sylvanus, "Father Abbot, we too love thy beloved disciple, for we now know that God loves him far more on account of his prompt obedience."† Trithemius, in his comment on this example, exclaims, "O child of perfect obedience! who preferred to leave incomplete an action praiseworthy of itself, rather than delay for a single moment the performance of what obedience enjoined!"‡ Let, then, our obed-

* Ex Vitis PP.—Part ii., Lib. de Obed., s. 1.

† Vere, Abbas, quem tu diligis, et nos diligimus: quoniam et Deus diligit eum.

‡ O filium perfectæ obedientiæ! qui maluit dimittere opus quamvis bonum, quod inchoârat, quam ad momentum, ut ita dicam, moram facere in obediendo.

ience, after the example of this holy monk, be ready, prompt, and full of life, not languishing and seeming at the point of death; else it will soon expire in wholesale disobedience. The agility of our movements is a sure sign of our bodily health; just so does the promptness of our obedience give token of the perfection with which our soul is possessed of this virtue.

297. But we must here remark, with St. Thomas, that in things that are agreeable and conformable to our natural inclinations, we cannot discern whether the alacrity wherewith we obey an order proceeds from virtue or from nature; because in things which suit our tastes, our very self-love imparts a certain readiness, and stirs us up to a certain promptness of execution. Who then, in beholding the prompt obedience of another in things agreeable, can judge whether this promptness proceed from natural impulse, or from the free choice of virtue? The case is different when the thing is arduous and difficult; for when nature feels nothing but repugnance, we are not stirred to action by any other influences than nature and grace. In confirmation of this, the Saint adduces the authority of Pope Gregory the Great, who says that punctual obedience to agreeable commands is either not obedience at all, or else is an obedience less meritorious than that yielded to precepts which thwart our inclinations.*

298. If you cast a huge log into the sea, you will not be able to judge of its weight; nay, on seeing it tossed to and fro on the waves, you will think that it is as light as a feather,

* Obedientia reddit promptam hominis voluntatem ad implendam voluntatem alterius, scilicet præcipientis. Si autem id, quod ei præcipitur, sit propter se ei volitum, etiam absque ratione præcepti, sicut accidit in prosperis, jam ex propriâ voluntate tendit in illud, et non videtur illud implere propter præceptum, sed propter voluntatem propriam. Sed cum illud quod præcipitur, nullo modo est secundum se volitum, sed est, secundum se consideratum, propriæ voluntati repugnans, sicut accidit in asperis; tunc omnino manifestum est, quod non impletur nisi propter præceptum. Et ideo Gregorius dicit in libro Moralium (Ult. cap 13) quod Obedientia, quam habet aliquis de suo in prosperis, est vel nulla, vel minor: quia scilicet voluntas propria non videtur principaliter tendere ad implendum præceptum, sed ad assequendum proprium volitum. In adversis autem et difficilibus, est major: quia voluntas propria ad nihil aliud tendit, quam in præceptum. 2, 2, q. 104, a 2

because it floats on the water. But draw it on to the shore, and you will soon discover how enormous is its weight, for what you could just now have moved with one of your hands, you can hardly stir with all the strength and efforts of both arms; simply because it is no longer buoyed up on the surface of the water. Thus, too, the truly obedient man is not proved by his obedience in things that accord with his inclinations, since he is spurred on by his self-love and his own will to their performance. But if you enjoin things that are hard and repugnant to nature, you will soon test his obedience, and the degree it has attained; as in the latter case he can be moved to action by nothing but the virtue of holy obedience. St. Columbanus, wishing to try the obedience of his monks, waited till most of them fell sick. Then going up to the dormitory, he cried out, "Ho! get up all of you, put on your clothes, and go and thresh the corn." He could not have found an occasion better suited to his purpose, since all being at that time exhausted, and scarce able to stand, the execution of such an order must have proved most difficult to them. They that possessed the virtue of obedience in its perfection, overcoming all natural repugnance, jumped out of bed immediately, and went to the threshing-floor, where they began to work under a broiling sun. Those, on the contrary, who were not well grounded in this virtue, allowed themselves to be overcome by the hardship such an order entailed and, in spite of it, remained in bed. But God soon showed how much He was pleased by the obedience of the former, and angered by the disobedience of the latter; for while He at once restored health to such as had proved their obedience, the rest paid the penalty of their disobedience by a whole year of sickness.*

299. The foregoing observation, as St. Thomas proceeds to say, concerns merely the knowledge that others may have of us and that we may have of ourselves; for as regards God, it may happen that an order, though quite conformable to the wishes of the subject, may be fulfilled by a devout person with perfect obedience, if he, making no account of his natural tastes, sets before himself in his actions nothing else but the fulfilment of his Superior's command,

* P. Platus. De Bono Stat. Relig., lib. ii., cap. 5.

and of the divine will signified to him through the Superior.* But notwithstanding this, and granting that it may sometimes happen, it is unquestionably certain that he who is readily obedient in easy and agreeable things, while showing himself restive and unwilling in what is arduous and disagreeable, gives no proof of being obedient and, in fact, is not so. Hence, if we wish to acquire the virtue of obedience, we must strain every nerve to obey in difficult and distasteful things.

300. We may here recall an instance of obedience, not only difficult but heroic, in two young monks. It is recorded by Cassian.† Abbot John having received a gift of a basket of ripe figs, determined to send them as a present to an old and infirm monk who dwelt in the remotest parts of the desert of Scete. He intrusted the errand to two young men, his disciples, commanding them to carry the figs faithfully to their destination, without touching a single one. After having set out from their Monastery, the two youths were surprised by a thick fog, and having lost their way, they wandered about those trackless wilds without any path or landmark to guide them. Several days having gone by, the Abbot, finding that the young men did not return home, sent to seek them, and they were both discovered on bended knees, quite dead, of pure starvation. But, what is truly wonderful, on examining the basket, it was found that they had not touched a single fig; preferring, as Cassian observes, to die rather than to transgress their Superior's command.‡ I do not relate this because I think that obedience is binding upon us even to the loss of our lives. I only mean that, if we have not the courage to die, like these two monks, in the exact observance of holy obedience, we should at least have the courage to mortify ourselves by readily embracing things which are difficult

* Sed hoc intelligendum est secundum id quod exterius apparet. Secundum tamen Dei judicium, qui corda rimatur, potest contingere quod etiam in prosperis obedientia aliquid de suo habens, non propter hoc sit minus laudabilis, si scilicet propria voluntaś obedientis non minus devote tendat ad implctionem præcepti. Ubi supra.

† Instit., lib. v., cap. 40.

‡ Eligentes animam potius quam fidem depositi perdere, vitamque potius amittere corporalem, quam senioris violare mandatum.

and repugnant to our frail nature, whenever they may be commanded us.

301. We must further observe that this prompt obedience of which we are now speaking, is not merely to be shown in connection with temporal concerns, that regard the government of our bodies and the regulation of household affairs; but much more in connection with spiritual things, such as prayer, penance, mortification and the inner ordering of our spiritual life. We should ever be disposed to undertake or to give up these things, to increase or lessen them, according to the orders of our Confessor, and the directions of other spiritual Superiors; for it is most easy in these matters to fail by excess or defect, with the danger of incurring serious evils. This is what is taught by Cassian, from whom we have just been quoting: "It is one and the self-same kind of disobedience, whether in earnestness of labour or from love of ease we violate the command of the Superior; it is as prejudicial to break the rules of the monastery out of sloth, as out of watchfulness; and lastly, it is as bad to transgress the precept of the Abbot by devout reading as to contemn it by sleeping."* The same writer adds, that disobedience in these matters is usually more perilous, as vicious actions done under colour of virtue are more difficult to be remedied or amended than those performed for the love of pleasure.†

302. We may measure hereby how far they go astray who insist on performing greater austerities than obedience allows: who prolong their prayer beyond the time set apart by their rule, or refuse to interrupt it at the summons of authority, as if prayer were to be preferred to holy obedience. Such persons labour to impoverish themselves, as they gain nothing by their prayers and

* Unum sane, atque idem inobedientiæ genus est, vel propter operationis instantiam, vel propter otii desiderium senioris violare mandatum; tamque dispendiosum est pro somno, quam pro vigiliâ, monasterii statuta convellere: tantum denique est Abbatis transire præceptum ut legas, quantum si contemnas, ut dormias. Coll. iv. cap. 26.

† Nisi quod perniciosiora, et a remediis longiora sunt vitia, quæ sub specie virtutum et imagine spiritualium rerum videntur emergere, quam illa, quæ ex aperto pro carnali voluptate gignuntur.

austerities, wherein not the will of their Superiors, but their own will is to be found. Hence, far from being pleased with them, God complains of such persons.* Blosius relates† that the Infant Jesus appeared to a certain nun who was at prayer in her cell, manifesting Himself to her with those charms which fill Paradise with delight. While the good nun was in the full enjoyment of this rapturous vision, one of the sisterhood knocked at the door of her cell to summon her to some duty of regular observance. At this signal, she said, "Lord! obedience calls me away; be pleased to await my return;" and forthwith she left the room. On the completion of her task, she returned to her cell, and on opening the door she saw the room filled with a heavenly light, amid which she saw Jesus Christ, no longer, as heretofore, under the appearance of a babe, as she had left Him, but grown up to the age of four-and-twenty. The nun exclaimed in amazement, "How, now, beloved Spouse! art Thou grown so much within so brief a space?" To which Christ made answer, "Thy prompt and ready obedience, O beloved Daughter! has made Me grow in thy heart, in so short a time, as much as I have grown to thine eyes."‡ This shows how pleasing to God is promptitude of obedience, not only in taking up, but in interrupting or ceasing from prayer or any other spiritual exercise. The first degree of obedience, then, is readiness in the fulfilment of the Superior's will, especially in things arduous and trying to nature, including also what concerns our spiritual direction. If any one have not attained this promptness, at least in his will, let him humble himself before God, for he has not yet set foot on the first step of this ladder.

* Quare jejunavimus, et non respexisti? humiliavimus animas nostras, et nescisti? Ecce in die jejunii vestri invenitur voluntas vestra. Isai. xviij. 3.

† In Apolog. pro Joan. Blosio, cap. 6: et alib.

‡ O filia carissima, profunda velocis, atque impigræ obedientiæ tuæ humilitas, me tam brevi tempore tam grandem effecit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND AND THIRD DEGREES OF PERFECT OBEDIENCE.

303. The second degree of perfect obedience is, as I have before said, to obey in that singleness of heart. after which the Apostle teaches the Ephesians to strive.* This consists in obeying the Superior as we would obey Christ Himself, with the assurance that we are doing His will; without reflecting whether the Superior be prudent or imprudent, learned or ignorant, zealous or indifferent; without judging or condemning what he enjoins, as unreasonable, unsuitable, imprudent, superfluous, or ill adapted to his purpose. In a word, it consists in devoutly blinding ourselves, closing our eyes to every human consideration, to fix them alone on the motive of fulfilling the will of God declared to us by the voice of His minister, who holds His place. The grounds for this motive will be shown in the next Chapter. Such is the advice St. Jerome gives to the monk Rusticus, and he gives the same to us. "Be fully persuaded, Rusticus, that whatever the Prelate of thy monastery orders thee, is useful and wholesome, nor sit in judgment on the decisions of thy Superiors; for thine it is to obey, as Moses says, *Hearken, O Israel, and hold thy peace.*†

304. Nor should it be objected that to act thus blindly is folly, or, to say the least, indiscretion; for it is, on the contrary, a most wise and prudent course of action. The Wise Man says: *Lean not on thine own prudence.*‡ And Isaias yet more emphatically exclaims: *Wo unto you who are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceit.*§ What means this *Wo unto you*, save that the

* Obedite in simplicitate cordis vestri. Ad Eph. vj. 5.

† Credas tibi salutare quidquid monasterii præpositus præceperit; nec de majorum sententiâ judices, cujus officii est obedire, et implere quæ jussa sunt, dicente Moyse: *Audi Israel, et tace.*

‡ Ne innitaris prudentiæ tuæ. Prov. iij. 5.

§ Væ qui sapientes estis in oculis vestris, et coram vobismetipsis prudentes Isai. v. 21.

tenour of their lives will be most miserable? But if prudence dictates that we should follow the counsel of another rather than our own opinion, it is only reasonable that we should accommodate our views to those of Superiors set over us, for they hold the place of God, and are assisted by Him with a special light in all that appertains to the government of their subjects. And what blindness can be more clear-sighted, than the blindness which ensures our being able to strike the exact mark when aiming at justice.

305. St. Bernard sets before us the ideal of this single-minded and blind obedience by the most illustrious instance that he could have adduced. "Our Blessed Saviour," he says, "saw Peter and Andrew casting their nets into the sea, and said to them: *Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.* At this call, they both, without hesitating or forming any contrary judgment, forthwith became His followers. But," as the saintly Abbot most justly observes, "there were not wanting to these two great Apostles numerous and serious difficulties, which might have hindered their obedience to the voice of our Redeemer. They might have said, 'Lord, we are poor men, and Thou art even poorer; if we give up our fishing, how shall we be able to live? We are simple, unlettered, untaught, rude, and ignorant, unable to preach, to instruct the nations, to rescue them from the slough of vice and unbelief, and to win them back to God.' At least, before they obeyed, they might have asked Jesus Christ whither He meant to take them, in what manner of work He intended to employ them, what was to be their toil, what their recompense? But Peter and his brother did none of these things, put no single question to our Lord, but with blind obedience forthwith left their boat, nets, kindred and friends, and followed Him." Having said this; St. Bernard exclaims: "Brethren! look to this; these things are written for our instruction, to set before us the true model of obedience, to show us how we, too, should, in singleness of heart and blindly, obey the commands of our Superiors and mortify our minds and hearts in homage to holy obedience."*

* Vis audire perfectæ obedientiæ formam? *Vidit Dominus*, ait Evangelista, *Petrum, et Andream mittentes rete in mare, et ait: Venite post me, faciam vos fieri piscatores hominum.* At illi continuo nihil dijudicantes, aut hesitantes,

306. Unless we act thus, it will avail us nothing, as St. John Climacus says, to render outward obedience to the commands of another. "When," writes this holy man, "we shall be entirely given up to obedience, it will in nowise be allowed us to judge of our Superior's orders, though we may detect in him shortcomings and failings—seeing that he is but a frail man and not an Angel. If we behave otherwise, the obedience we render will be of no use towards our advance in perfection."* And he is in the right; for while, on the one hand, we shall do well by obeying, on the other we shall do ill by condemning, disapproving, and inwardly murmuring against the prescriptions of authority. So that when the balance is struck, the evil will surpass the good, the chastisement will outweigh the reward. "What then must we do?" will you ask. "Our mind is not endowed with freedom as is our intellect; thoughts even in despite of us arise within us; contrary reasons and objections present themselves sorely against our will, and help to render our obedience painful and irksome." St. John Climacus himself points out the remedy. "Whenever thoughts contrary to obedience arise within you, banish them with the same promptitude with which you are wont to reject unclean and immodest fancies."† Yet must we do this with calm, looking out for reasons to excuse and defend the order of our Superior, and to avoid condemning him; so as to bend the understanding to lean to the side of the command: whence the obedience that results will be without agitation, cheerful, and full of peace.

307. Such was not the behaviour of certain nuns in a convent of Poor Clares; for which fault they underwent a signal judg-

non solliciti unde viverent, non considerantes quonam modo rudes homines et sine litteris prædicatores fieri possent; nihil denique interrogantes, sine omni morâ, *relictis retibus et navi secuti sunt eum.* Agnoscite, fratres, quoniam propter vos scripta sunt hæc, ut discentes veram obedientiæ formam, castigetis corda vestra in obedientiâ caritatis. Serm. 2, De S. Andreâ.

* Cum obedientiæ stadium fuerimus ingressi, minime in aliquo judicare licebit institutorum nostrum, etiamsi in illo (homo enim est) modica aliqua delicta animadverterimus. Sin vero fecerimus, nihil nobis obedientia proderit. Gradu 4.

† Cum tibi cogitatio suggerit, ut prælatum aut judices aut damnes, ab eâ non secus quam a fornicatione, resili.

ment of God.* There dwelt in this convent a nun called Berengaria, who, out of humility, had devoted herself to the abject and mean offices of the kitchen. Her Sisters, seeing her always occupied amid dishes, platters and saucepans, made no account of her. At the election of a new Abbess, there arose a contention among them, as there were many who aspired to this charge, to the exclusion of others. They came at length to the scrutiny; and God, by a special Providence, had so arranged that each nun, in order to avoid favouring any of the Community to her own prejudice, gave her vote to Berengaria, each one being under the full conviction that she was the only one who gave that vote, as all deemed her wholly unfit for such an office. At the examination of the voting-papers, it was discovered, to the amazement of all, that Berengaria had been unanimously elected. The canonical Superior, on receiving notice of the election, declared it valid, and confirmed it by his authority. But these nuns, who had been wont to consider in the person of their Abbess, not Jesus Christ, but only personal endowments, began to despise Berengaria as unfit, as a nun of poor talent and less experience; and what was worse, they refused to submit and to pay her obedience. Meanwhile, Berengaria summoned her first Chapter, which but few of the nuns cared to attend. She then, being filled with the spirit of the Lord, exclaimed in a loud voice, "As my Sisters refuse to obey me, and despise me, although I am their lawful Superior, arise from your tombs, ye departed members of the Community that are reposing in this place, and do you at least obey me."† No sooner had she uttered these words, than, by an unheard-of prodigy, seven nuns who were buried in the Chapter-room arose from their graves, and presented themselves before the Abbess to do her homage; nor did they depart until they had obtained her permission. It is needless to relate what was the shame and confusion of the contumacious nuns at this prodigious event; each one may figure it to himself. God would thereby warn these Religious

* Franc Gonz., 2. part. in Prov. Portugal. Monast. 15, Claris.

† Quandoquidem meæ sorores mihi obedire renuunt, meque legitimam earum prælatam aspernuntur: surgite vos quæ in hoc loco dormitis, mihique paretote.

to obey with a holy singleness of heart, without regarding the personal qualities of their Abbess, whether good or bad; but only the character, the authority, and the person of Christ represented in her.

308. He, then, who would attain this blind and single-minded obedience, must be very careful not to go on arguing for and against the orders of his Spiritual Fathers or other Superiors, whoever they may be; not to entertain suspicions about each thing enjoined him, or to hesitate as to its performance, whenever he fails to perceive the plain reason for it; not to obey willingly only when the order is to his liking or when it is evidently lawful, or when its expediency is demonstrated by an unquestionable authority. This, says St. Bernard, is too delicate, in other words, too imperfect, an obedience: it is that only of weak souls. He that is truly obedient must close his eyes to these human considerations, relying on him who holds the place of God, and, without all this discussion, performing what is commanded for the sole motive of doing God's will.*

309. It is to be borne in mind, however, that this dove-like simplicity, which excludes reflection, examination and disapproval, is to be practised in those cases only where we do not manifestly discover sin. If it ever should happen that the Superior commands what is plainly at variance with God's law, the subject, as I have already said, must put on the wisdom of the serpent, to discern the impropriety of the precept, and to reject it with a holy liberty. This is the teaching of the same St. Bernard.†

* Imperfecti cordis, et infirmæ prorsus voluntatis indicium est statuta seniorum studiosius discutere, hærere ad singula quæ injunguntur, exigere de quibusque, rationem, et male suspicari de quolibet præcepto, cujus causa latuerit: nec unquam libenter obedire, nisi cum audire, contigerit quod forte libuerit, aut quod non aliter licere, aut expedire monstraverit vel aperta ratio, vel indubitata auctoritas. Delicata satis, immo nimis molesta est hujusmodi obedientia. De Præcept. et Dispens.

† *Estote prudentes, sicut serpentes*, sufficiente quippe quod sequitur, *et simplices sicut columbæ*. Nec dico a subditis mandata præpositorum esse dijudicanda, ubi nihil juberi deprehenditur divinis contrarium institutis: sed necessariam assero et prudentiam, quâ advertatur si quid adversatur; et libertatem, quâ et ingenue contemnatur. Ad Adam Monachum, Epist. 7.

310. The third degree of perfection which this virtue must attain is to obey with cheerfulness. Perfect virtue is that which puts forth its acts with ease and cheerfulness; and when this is the case even in arduous and difficult matters, it rises to the degree of heroism. This is still more true of supernatural virtues; for, as the Apostle says: *God loves a cheerful giver.** And, it is from these very words that St. Bernard, whom we have so often quoted, draws the conclusion just now laid down, that the third degree of the perfection of obedience is to practise it with cheerfulness and joy.† And he will have this cheerfulness display itself in the very countenance itself and in the mildness of our speech, as unmistakable tokens of a joyous heart. And, on the contrary, the clouds of sadness that overcast the serenity of the face, are clear signs of the disquiet and gloom of the soul; since it can hardly come to pass that the countenance will not change when the heart is in trouble.‡

311. The reason why we assign this cheerfulness in obeying as the highest degree in the perfection of this virtue is obvious, since it shows that the virtue of obedience has triumphed over all its opponents; has taken possession of the soul, and holds therein an undisturbed sway. We see that usually the air is less in motion about noon, because the heat of the sun has tempered the chill contracted by the atmosphere from the night dew; and thus, from the cessation of the conflict between two opposite qualities, the air remains still and motionless. So, too, when virtue has overcome and wholly cast down the repugnance of nature, it rules the soul in calm, as its mistress, exercising its several acts with joy, satisfaction and gladness. St. Basil would have us take the Apostles as our model of the cheerful alacrity with which we ought to render obedience to those whose right it is; for they,

* Hilarem datorem diligit Deus. II. ad Cor. ix. 7.

† Tertius gradus obedientiæ est hilariter obedire: *Non ex tristitiâ,* inquit Apostolus, *non ex necessitate: hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus.* Ibid.

‡ Serenitas in vulto, dulcedo in sermone multum colorat obedientiam obsequentis. Unde gentilis ille poeta ait sic: Super omnia vultus accessere boni. Quis enim locus obedientiæ ubi tristitiæ cernitur amaritudo? Ostendunt plerumque voluntatem animi signa exteriora, et difficile est ut vultum non mutent, qui mutant voluntatem. Serm. de Virt. Obedientiæ.

on hearing the command of Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel throughout the world, at once bowed their necks under the yoke of obedience, and with souls no less prompt than cheerful, went forth into the public places to face outrage, insult, the Cross, and death itself in all its most cruel shapes. Whence, he concludes, that a Religious (and the like applies to all other persons) should obey his Superior, after the same manner, in things to which he feels repugnance.* But as it is no easy matter to obey with the promptitude, single-mindedness, and cheerfulness requisite for perfect obedience, especially when it has to be rendered in arduous things, it remains for me to set forth certain motives which, if fully penetrated and pondered, may impart the strength and vigour necessary in order to obey thus perfectly, whensoever it befalls us to receive the orders of those set over us in authority.

CHAPTER VII.

CERTAIN MOTIVES EVER TO BE KEPT IN VIEW IN ORDER TO OBEY WITH PERFECTION.

312. I AM far from questioning that the rare prerogatives of obedience, upon which we were discoursing in the third and fourth Chapters, supply the best motives to urge us to acquire this virtue; for, as they inspire us with a high esteem for it, so do they stir us up to practise it with perfection. But to speak accurately they are, as it were, remote motives standing in need of attentive consideration and of leisurely reflection, in order to produce the wished-for result. Whence it is necessary to set forth other and more proximate motives, such as may be ever at hand as often as the Superior signifies his will unto us, and which

* Apostoli, demissâ mentis cervice, obedientiæ jugum subierunt; alacrique animo in feras, in contumelias, in lapidationes, in ignominias, in cruces, et in varias neces processere. . . . Hanc obedientiam is, qui secundum Deum vere est monachus, antistiti suo præstet oportet. In Const. Monast., cap. 23.

may, the moment we hear his voice, present themselves at once to our minds, and spur us on to the execution of his commands; for these will most surely be more practical and effectual to enable us to obey with promptitude, singleness of heart, and cheerfulness.

313. The first motive, then, will be that the Superior, whether spiritual or temporal, holds the place of God. St. Paul teaches that whatever authority men have over us, they have it not of themselves, but because it is imparted to them by God, in order that they may be His representatives; so that whoever withstands lawfully-constituted authority, withstands God Himself, and instead of working out his salvation by obedience, earns for himself by his disobedience everlasting damnation.* He repeats the same thing writing to the Colossians: *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.*† But what is more to our purpose, Jesus Christ Himself has made this substitution, placing our Superiors in His stead, and giving us clearly to understand that in obeying them, we render obedience unto Himself, and that the contempt and dishonour we show to them, will be taken by Him as shown to Himself.‡ St. Bernard makes the following remarks on this text:—"God has to a certain extent made Superiors like unto Himself, since He chooses to account as shown to Himself, both the honour and obedience rendered by us and the contumacy exhibited."§

314. This once laid down, how is it possible, may I ask, for a subject not to obey with all due perfection, if when receiving a

* Non est potestas, nisi a Deo. Quæ autem sunt, a Deo ordinata sunt. Itaque qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit. Qui autem resistunt, sibi ipsi damnationem acquirunt. Ad Rom. xiij. 1.

† Quodcumque facitis, ex animo operamini, sicut Domino, et non hominibus, scientes, quod a Domino accipietis retributionem hæreditatis. Ad Coloss. 3.

‡ Qui vos audit, me audit; qui vos spernit, me spernit. Luc. x. 16.

§ Deus prælatos sibi quandoque æquare in utrâque parte dignatur. Sibimet imputat illorum reverentiam, et contemptum, specialiter contestans eis: *Qui vos audit, me audit, qui vos spernit, me spernit.* Annon hoc ipsum et regula nostra perhibet, ubi ait: Obedientia quæ majoribus præbetur, Deo exhibetur? De Præcept. et Dispens.

command from his Superior, he discerns in him, by the eye of faith, the very person of Christ Himself, and when the voice of authority sounds altogether different in the ears of his spirit and those of his body—because he considers it the voice of the Redeemer? If Jesus Christ, descending from His glorious throne, were to appear to you, bright and shining, and with His own divine lips were to intimate to you a command, could you dare to condemn such an order as indiscreet, or unreasonable, or as dictated by evil passions? Would you hesitate about fulfilling it, would you set about it with but half a will? God forbid! Rather would you hasten with all speed, without the least thought of contradiction, to fulfil in all gladness and cheerfulness the precept laid upon you by your most loving Saviour. Why, then, do you behave differently with your Superior when he commands or counsels you, as the obedience rendered to Christ in His own person in nowise differs from that which we render to the Superior in the person of Christ? As St. Bernard has excellently put it, "Whether God, or a man holding the place of God, gives the command, it should be obeyed with the same care, the same loving reverence.* For God has expressly declared that every such command proceeds from Him."†

315. St. John Climacus relates that he was once dining with the Community in a certain monastery, when the Abbot called to him a venerable octogenarian, who had spent forty years in that sacred enclosure. He came forthwith, and the Abbot, without taking the least notice of him, left him standing dinnerless for two whole hours. In seeing this hoary-headed, venerable looking old man thus mortified, St. John could not help feeling for him. As soon as the meal was over, and the Community had taken their departure, he drew him aside, and asked him in confidence what was passing through his mind all the while that the Abbot, without assigning any reason, kept him standing in his presence? His answer was most worthy of remembrance. "I

* Sive Deus, sive homo vicarius Dei mandatum quodcumque tradiderit, pari profecto exequendum est curâ, pari reverentiâ deferendum. De Præcept. et Dispens.

† Qui vos audit, me audit.

figured to myself in the Superior the person of Jesus Christ, and thus I regarded the order given to me as coming not from a man, but as emanating from the lips of our Redeemer Himself. Wherefore I stood in the Abbot's presence, as it were before the Altar in prayer, and by this sincere faith checked every thought contrary to obedience."* Happy should we be, if, with the like simple faith, we were to acknowledge in our Superiors the person of Christ; for then even we ourselves would never admit bitter and disquieting thoughts, that mar the single-mindedness of our obedience, clog its promptitude, and trouble its cheerfulness.

316. From what has hitherto been said, it follows by strict consequence, that whatever the Superior commands is the will of God, provided it be not plainly evil and sinful; for the Superior being set by God in His own place, is the interpreter of His most adorable will. Such is the maxim laid down by the Apostle in the passage we have quoted above: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye service as pleasing men; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*† It is impossible to speak more plainly. Hence St. Bernard repeatedly insists on this principle: "Whatever is commanded by a man holding the place of God—provided, however, it be not manifestly at variance with the divine law—must in all respects be regarded as if God Himself had ordered the thing; for it matters little whether God manifests His will of Himself, or by His ministers."‡ The words *manifestly at variance*

* Christi imaginem superiori imposui: neque enim ab illo hoc præceptum exîsse sed a Deo penitus existimavi. Quare, Pater Joannes, non coram mensâ hominum, sed coram altari divino adstare me putans, orabam, nullamque malignam cogitationem admittebam contra superiorem, pro sincerâ in eum fide, et caritate. Gradu 4.

† Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo, non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes; sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo, cum bonâ voluntate servientes, sicut Domino. Ad Ephes. vj. 5.

‡ Quamobrem quidquid vice Dei præcipit homo, quod non sit tamen certum displicere Deo, non secus omnino est, quam si præcipiat Deus. Quid enim interest, utrum per se, an per suos ministros, sive homines, sive angelos, hominibus innotescat suum placitum Deus? De Præcept. et Dispensat.

are to be borne in mind as, in cases of doubt whether or not the thing commanded be pleasing or displeasing to God, the subject *ought* to obey. Because in such cases it belongs to the Superior to determine what is the divine will.

317. But I will go further, and boldly assert that we are more secure of complying with the will of God when commanded to do anything by a lawful Superior, than if God deigned to reveal to us what was His pleasure, and even than if Jesus Christ were to declare it to us with His own lips. It is easy to see the reason. There is no vision, or private revelation, which is not open to illusion and error, and which, consequently, does not leave room for doubt as to its being a genuine manifestation of the will of Heaven; but there can be no question whatever that in the command of the Superior the will of God is made manifest to us, and that it is intimated to us by means of him, since this is a maxim grounded on the Holy Scripture, and certain with the certainty of faith.

318. In proof of this indisputable truth, I may quote a practical instance of great authority. St. Teresa, wishing to start the foundation of the Convent at Avila, according to the command of God, began by laying the whole plan before her Confessor, who, being guided by the rules of human prudence, forbade her to set about this undertaking. The Saint, as became one that had the true spirit of God, finding herself thus placed between the commands of Jesus Christ and the prohibition of her Director, hesitated not for a moment, nor doubted as to the course she ought to take, but determined at once to follow the directions of her Confessor rather than obey the order she had received from Jesus Christ; and our Lord deigned to express His high approval of her having thus acted. Nay more, the Saint herself bears witness that Christ frequently commanded her to act thus. These are her own words: "Whenever our Lord commanded me anything in prayer, and my Confessor ordered the contrary, Jesus returned to tell me that I was to obey my Director. But His Divine Majesty afterwards changed the heart of my Confessor, so that he came at length to prescribe to me that which the Lord required."*

* In her Life, chap. 26.

319. If, then, the assurance we have of doing God's will, by the fulfilment of our Superior's orders, be so well established, we should keep this motive deeply graven in our mind and heart, as it is unquestionably the most availing to exclude every sophistical objection which may occur to us against the orders of those set over us, and the most effectual to make us hasten with willing cheerfulness to the performance of whatever may be enjoined, harsh and difficult though it may be; for in truth, nothing so braces and cheers our heart as the assurance of doing God's will and of pleasing Him.

320. It must have been this lively assurance of doing God's will, declared to them by their Superiors, that sustained certain holy men in fulfilling commands not only arduous, but clearly beyond their natural strength, at times purposely laid upon them. How else could they have undertaken them with such courage, and have carried them through with such constancy? Abbot Mutius was commanded by his Superior to throw into a neighbouring stream the infant son whom he had brought with him to the monastery, in order that the boy might be trained in the path of perfection. At the first intimation, Mutius caught the child in his arms, put him on his shoulders, and hastened to the banks of the river to drown him in its waters; and had all but done the deed, were it not for certain monks whom the Abbot had posted there to prevent the execution of his command. As Cassian relates, God was so pleased at this act of obedience, that He revealed to the Superior that Mutius, by this act, had equalled the sacrifice of Abraham.*

321. But still more admirable was the faith of the young man concerning whom Sulpitius Severus tells the following story;† for if Mutius sacrificed to obedience the life of his child, this other placed his own life in the utmost danger for the same motive:— The youth went to one of the most severe monasteries of Egypt, and, prostrating himself at the feet of the Abbot, begged that the

* Cujus fides, et devotio in tantum Deo fuit accepta, ut divino statim testimonio comprobata sit: revelatum namque est continuo seniori, hâc eum obedientiâ Abrahæ patriarchæ opus implesse. Instit., lib iv., cap. 28.

† In Dialog. De Vitâ S. Martini, cap. 12.

holy habit might be given to him. The Abbot, suspecting him to be of a soft character and delicate constitution, judged him wholly unable to bear so heavy a burden, and briefly refused his petition, saying, "My Son, this sort of life will not suit you, choose another monastery more adapted to the deficiency of your strength." The young man lost not heart at this refusal, but boldly declared that he was ready for everything. "Your fervour," replied the Abbot, "pleases me much, but you must consult your own strength. You are accustomed to live in the midst of luxury, here you will have to lead a hard and laborious life. Hitherto you have been wont to give orders and to parade yourself, here you must obey and keep silence. Formerly you have done as you pleased, here you will have to submit to the harsh commands whereby I try my monks." The youth answered, "Father, I am ready to do whatever you may order, even were it to cast myself into the fire." Now, there happened to be in the place where this conference was held, an oven, which was then lighted for baking bread. The flames in it were crackling and darting up and, not being able to confine themselves within its narrow limits, were bursting forth violently amid countless sparks. "Well, then," said the Abbot, "I will now test whether your obedience is made of such metal as you would have me believe. Go, at once, into this fiery oven." Scarce had he said the word than the youth rushed into this whirlpool of fire. But the flames, overcome and worsted by the lively faith of the young man—so says the historian—dared not to injure him, and withdrew from him as from the three Holy Children, leaving him unscathed in his limbs and clothing. He came forth from the oven, and he who was thought to have been burnt to ashes appeared, to his own amazement and that of the bystanders, as if sprinkled with a refreshing dew.*

322. I might further mention the faith of St. Maurus, who, by the command of his master, St. Benedict—as we read in the Dia-

* Nec distulit parere præcepto: medias flammas nihil cunctatus ingreditur, quæ mox tam audaci fide victæ, velut illis quondam Hebræis pueris, cessere venienti. Superata natura est: fugit incendium, et qui putabatur arsurus, venti frigido rore perfusus, se ipse miratus est.

logues of Pope Gregory the Great*—threw himself into the main stream of a river to rescue Placidus, without taking notice of the evident risk he was running of being drowned himself. But the waters grew solid under the soles of his feet, so that he could walk on them as on a pavement of glass. I might relate many other events of this description, wherein appears an heroic faith in obeying the most arduous commands; for Church history is full of them. But what we have already said will suffice to convince us that nothing can so much avail to render obedience more simple without reflection, more ready without delay, and more cheerful without disquiet, as a firm and lively faith that whatever the Superior commands us is the will of God.

323. But it by no means follows that it is lawful for Superiors to give such orders, or for subjects to obey them. The Superiors and the subjects, of whom we have been speaking, were moved by an extraordinary impulse from God, which assured the former that what they ordered was conformable to the divine will, and the latter that they were obeying a divine command, giving to both an infallible certainty of a prosperous issue, as the events themselves show. What we should infer is this: if an extraordinary faith, infused by God into the hearts of fervent subjects, gave them courage to undertake things so extraordinary and so far surpassing natural strength, surely an ordinary but lively faith, that whatever the Superior orders is the will of God, will strengthen us to perform with perfection the ordinary though arduous tasks that may be laid upon us.

CHAPTER VIII.

FURTHER MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD EVER BE AT HAND IN ORDER TO OBEY WITH PERFECTION.

324. He who is obedient can never go astray. This is a motive deducible from what has been said in the foregoing Chapter, for there can be no error, delusion, or guilt in what is conformable

* Dialog., lib. i., cap. 7.

to the divine will, as those things which are done in obedience most surely are, according to what we have shown. This is another efficacious motive for perfect obedience, as it excludes inward murmurings, inspires promptness of execution, and cheers us at our task with the assurance that what we do is right. This was the motive proposed by the Apostle to the Hebrews, in order to render them perfect in this virtue: *Obey them that are set over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as having to give account.** At the Judgment-seat of God they will have to answer for your doings, while you will be shielded under the mantle of a ready and faithful obedience. We should derive great consolation from this text of the Apostle, and great encouragement in order to determine to obey with readiness and cheerfulness. Who is there but dreads the presence of the Supreme Judge? especially when he thinks of the rigorous account he will have to give of his every, even least, action? Who but would wish to have an advocate at that awful Judgment-seat to defend his cause? Now, there is no advocate so effective as holy obedience, since obedience will undertake to defend every act of ours, proving each one to be free from guilt, liable to no punishment, and deserving of everlasting reward. If the Sovereign Judge ask you why you have not multiplied fasts, prolonged watchings, dealt more severely with your body by means of hair-shirts, disciplines, and other instruments of penance; why you have not spent a longer time in prayer; why you have not repeated a more exact confession of such and such sins; why you have taken to such and such occupations rather than to others; and if to questions such as these you can truly answer, "Because holy obedience gave me the command," every one of these accounts will be fully discharged, and be declared by the Sovereign Judge to be deserving not of chastisement but of reward. And ought not this assurance of not being liable to go astray, under the guidance of obedience, suffice to engage us to give ourselves up with promptness and cheerfulness to the guidance of our Superiors?

325. We may illustrate this by an event related by St. John

* Obedite præpositis vestris, et subjacete eis: ipsi enim pervigilant, quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri. Ad Hebr. xiij. 17.

Climacus,* and which is, moreover, recorded in the Greek Memologium, concerning a St. Acacius, who is also called St. Innocent. While yet in early life, he entered a monastery in Asia, and was placed under the direction of a rude, harsh, and unreasonable old man. The orders which he received from this master were so strange, the chastisements inflicted were so cruel, as almost to surpass belief. At times, the luckless youth was to be seen with eyes bruised and bleeding from the blows which he received, or his face was all swollen, or his head mangled with the strokes of a stick wherewith the heartless old man chastised him. Yet he submitted to all this in obedience and humility, without the least murmur. He lived nine years under the guidance of this cruel spiritual Superior, and died, in consequence of such treatment, at a tender age. After death, he was, in accordance with the usage of the monastery, buried without delay in the cemetery. In the meantime, the cruel old man, being on a visit to a monk of godly life, brought the news of his novice's decease. At so unexpected a piece of intelligence, the host exclaimed in amazement, "Is it possible?" "Come," said the old man, "and see him with your own eyes." On arriving at the cemetery, the holy monk began to question the departed youth, as if he were still alive, saying, "Brother Innocent, is it true that thou art dead?" The saintly youth, accustomed as he had been in his life-time to obedience exercised it even in death, and replied as follows: "Is it possible, venerable Father, that one wholly given to obedience can ever die?"† I will stop here, as the remainder of the story is not to my purpose. But let me ask, What was the meaning of these words of Innocent? was it that he had not died according to the flesh? Assuredly not; for thus his words had been at variance with the evident truth. What, then, did he mean? What but that one truly obedient cannot die the death that is everlasting; and the reason is, that he cannot sin. If the important maxim be firmly rooted in our minds, that in obeying we can neither sin nor perish, it will cast down all sophistical reasonings, reluctance,

* Gradu 4.

† Quomodo, venerande pater, fieri potest, ut homo obedientiæ deditus moriatur?

and bitterness of feeling, which arise to disquiet us in our acts of obedience, and will render them prompt, simple, cheerful, and perfect in the sight of the Lord.

326. The last motive shall be the example of Jesus Christ. The first motive alleged was that the Superior represents the person of Jesus Christ; the last motive is, that his injunctions should remind us of the example of Christ, and stimulate us to imitate Him. The whole life of our Redeemer, if we consider it attentively, was nothing but a continual exercise of obedience to the will of His Eternal Father. He was born far from home, in a mean stable, in obedience to the orders of the princes of this world. He passed His childhood in obedience, in the arms and on the lap of Mary, His mother. His youth was spent in obedience to His parents under a lowly roof, for *He was subject to them.** And, lastly, it was obedience that led Him to stripes, thorns, the Cross; to Calvary and to death.† How then shall we be too proud to submit to man for God's sake, when He, all God as He is, rendered Himself subject to men for the love of man? What subject but glories in his likeness to his prince? Where is the soldier who does not boast of treading in the footsteps of his general? What disciple but is proud of imitating his master? How much rather should not we aspire to become, by perfect obedience, like unto our Redeemer, Who is our Master, our Captain, our Chief, our King, our God, our all? "Learn!" exclaimed St. Bernard, fired with a holy zeal, "learn, dust and ashes that thou art, by so illustrious an example, how to obey. What! God in person would subject Himself to the commands of men, and thou, proud ashes that thou art, wilt not be subject to the orders of thy Superiors! God humbles Himself, and thou liftest thyself up; God places himself under the feet of men, and thou wouldest rule, and not be ruled."‡ He concludes thus:

* Luc. ij. 25.

† Factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Ad Philip. ij. 8.

‡ Disce homo, obedire: disce terra, subdi: disce pulvis, obtemperare. De auctore tuo loquens evangelista: *Et erat*, inquit, *subditus illis*, haud dubium quin Mariæ, et Joseph. Erubesce, superbe cinis. Deus se humiliat, et tu te exaltas? Deus se hominibus subdit, et tu dominari gestiens hominibus, tuo te præponis auctori? Hom. I., super Missus est.

"Would to God that, when these thoughts of pride came into our minds, Christ would say to each one of us, as to Peter, *Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things of God.*"*

327. To come, then, to the practice of what has been set forth in these two Chapters, let us act as follows:—As often as we come into the presence of our Superiors, we will renew within us the spirit of faith, which teaches us that these hold the place of Christ, to Whom we are bound to be subject, even as Christ subjected Himself to obedience for love of us; that their voice and will is the voice and will of God, by following which we cannot go astray. In this faith let us receive their commands, and we shall thus be enabled to obey promptly, in singleness of heart and cheerfully, in all perfection.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS, ON THE PRESENT ARTICLE.

328. First suggestion. The Director must take the greatest pains to implant and to establish in the souls committed to his guidance, this virtue of obedience; for without it all his labour will be lost, and the devices he may have employed to lead them onward to perfection will go for nothing. If, while he advises, commands, exhorts, proposes, they obey not, it is obvious that, notwithstanding his direction, excellent though it may be, they will never make any progress. To this end he may make use of two means. First, let him strive to instil into them a high esteem and ardent love of this virtue, and a great affection for it, as it is impossible to acquire a virtue, unless the will, at the very outset, effectually resolve to gain the virtue. He may, for that purpose, develop to them the considerations and motives which

* Utinam mihi aliquando tale aliquid cogitanti Deus respondere dignetur, quod suo increpando respondit apostolo: *Vade*, inquit, *post me, Satana: quia non sapis quæ Dei sunt.*

we have set forth, and cause them to meditate thereon at their leisure, for such considerations are the medium through which light comes to us, and light enkindles in the will the love of virtue and the desire of its acquisition.

329. Secondly, let him keep his disciples in a continual practice of obedience, for the habit of virtue can be acquired only by the frequent repetition of acts; and, to speak of the virtue under consideration, it is obvious that no one can acquire a facility for moving his will in dependence upon the will of another, if he be accustomed to regulate his life according to his own fancies. Let the Confessor, then, strive to keep his penitents in dependence on his advice and direction in all things, as far as may be; not only in regard of the use of the Sacraments, but of penances, mortifications, prayers, and even of indifferent outward actions. He must, at times, break their wills by denying them something lawful in itself—as, for instance, Communions, penances, or some other good thing to which he may see them most inclined—and this for the sole purpose of rendering their wills tractable, docile, and dependent on the views of others; which will be the greatest benefit he can confer upon them. St. Teresa relates of herself, that at one time she had a Confessor who frequently thwarted her, to her great mortification, and she says that he was more useful to her than any other. "He it was who, to my mind, helped me the most." But the demon, perceiving better than herself the profit she was deriving, tempted her at intervals to forsake his guidance. God, however, knowing that the direction she received from His minister was most judicious, inwardly rebuked her as often as she adhered to the suggestion. The Saint concludes by saying that this Director was the one best fitted to deal with her somewhat stubborn will. These are her words: "As often as I determined to leave him, I at once felt that I ought not to do it, and I became conscious of an inward rebuke which harassed and afflicted me far more than did my Confessor. At times, then, I was tried by mortifying treatment on the one hand, and by reproaches on the other; and I stood in need of both on account of my unmortified will."*

* In her Life, chap. 26.

330. Second suggestion. But care must be taken that these thwartings and crossings of our penitents' inclinations be ever guided by moderation and discretion, otherwise, instead of being of advantage, they will work great damage in the soul. Wherefore, unless urged by an extraordinary impulse of the Holy Ghost, the Director will take heed not to command impossibilities; for, as we said above, this is unlawful. And further, he will beware of commanding things which are out of proportion with the bodily and spiritual strength of his penitents, otherwise, instead of breaking in and mortifying their wills, he will drive them to great straits. He must take the measure of their spiritual progress, and according to that, must thwart their inclinations more or less, and let the hand of mortification weigh more or less lightly upon them. In a word, for his commands to have a good effect, he must never fail to examine what their shoulders have sufficient strength to bear, and what they are too weak to support. St. Teresa unfolds to us a certain part of her experience, which confirms and illustrates what we are saying. She tells us that having consulted as to the state of her soul with an eminent servant of God, he proposed to her some spiritual remedies which were arduous and far beyond her spiritual strength. The result was an intense sorrow, and so deep a despondency, that had she not been able to confer with other advisers, she would have utterly lost hope, and quite forsaken the spiritual life. But let us allow her to tell her own tale, which will far better enable us to understand the state of the case. "He started," she writes, "with a holy resolve to direct me as if I were robust and far advanced . . . . to the end that I might in nowise displease or offend His Divine Majesty. When I became aware that he was so resolved upon correcting the smallest faults, from which I wanted strength to set myself free at once with so much perfection, I conceived great anguish; and observing that he looked on the state of my soul as a state which ought to be thoroughly and at once changed, it seemed to me that I must put in practice a degree of skill and energy beyond that to which I had been accustomed. At length I came to know that the means which he prescribed to me were not those which were needed for my cure, but that they would, perhaps, have suited

some more perfect soul. I found that although I had made considerable advance, as respects favours and graces received from God, I was very much behind in principles of virtue and mortification; and certainly if I had not happened to treat with others besides my adviser, I believe that I should never have made any progress in spirit; because the affliction caused by my perceiving that I did not and, as it seemed to me, could not, do what he ordered, was sufficient to make me lose hope and give up everything."* The Director will now realise the need of the moderation and discretion spoken of above, in mortifying the will of his penitents, since this Saint, generous as she was and specially favoured of God, might easily have been ruined by an indiscreet Director.

331. Third suggestion. Besides discretion, the Director must also show courtesy when enjoining on his penitents things which mortify their wills. Wherefore, when he has occasion to command anything contrary to their inclinations, let him so do it, that they may not perceive that his purpose is to mortify them: he should rather take some opportunity in which he detects them in some shortcoming, in order that they may not be aware of his intention. I say this, as there are certain persons (and this is more frequently the case with women) who, on discovering that their Confessor is trying to mortify them, instead of being humbled, are puffed up, as they take it as a token that the Director makes great account of their spiritual state; and hence, instead of humbling them, it inspires them rather with vanity: which would not be the case did they look on the mortification as deserved. In breaking in the will of a penitent, he must also beware of harsh language, and of angry and cutting expressions (unless, perchance, with certain persons of rare virtue, as such are able to stand any trial to which he may put them); since such language generally causes bad blood even in spiritual persons. As they have to overcome themselves in order to obey, it is better that they should do it with calm rather than with disquiet; with a soul at peace rather than with their heart troubled by storms.

332. Fourth suggestion. The Director will regard obedience as the touchstone for the discernment of spirits, especially of such

* In her Life, chap. 23.

as are extraordinary either in prompting to penances, or in receiving from God singular favours of visions, revelations, or raptures. By no one virtue can we so surely test, as by this, whether a spirit be upright and sincere, or counterfeit and corrupt. The reason of which is obvious, to my thinking. All the perfection and imperfection of the spiritual life is rooted in the will; since all our actions, whether inward or outward, if good, derive their virtuous character from the will, and if evil, contract from the same source the defilement of vice. Now, how is it possible, may I ask, that an intractable, stubborn will, as yet not subjected by obedience to Superiors and to God, can be the temple into which the Holy Ghost descends to work His wonders? How can it be a garden wherein the Lord takes His delight, a throne to which the Most High comes down, and on which He takes His seat?

333. What Nicephorus has recorded in his Church History concerning St. Simon Stylites, is well known to every one.* This holy man had fixed his abode not on earth, nor in heaven, but between the two: in other words, on the top of a lofty pillar. Here he led neither a human life (as he was far out of reach of all converse with men) nor yet an angelic one (since it was one continued act of penance) but one wholly godlike; in the unceasing contemplation of divine things. The monks who dwelt on the heights of the lofty mountains in the neighbourhood, on beholding so strange and singular a mode of life, wished to test his spirit, and rightly thought that the most infallible touchstone they could employ was that of obedience. To this end they sent some monks to him with the following message: "What strange life is this that thou are leading, Simon, on the top of this pillar? Wherefore hast thou departed from the old and safe path trodden by the Saints? and why hast thou marked out anew one for thyself? Descend at once from the pillar and come and live in Community with us. Such is the command of the monks, who have sent us to thee in order that we might acquaint thee with their will." It must, meanwhile, be borne in mind that these deputies had received the following instructions:—If Simon showed himself disposed to comply with the orders of holy

* Lib. xxiv., cap. 15.

obedience, they were to confirm him in his purpose of perse vering in the life which he had adopted; but should he make resistance, they were to drag him by force from the top of his pillar. But no sooner had the holy man heard the orders of the monks, than he thanked them for the charitable care which they took of him, and he prepared to come down at once from his column. Then the messengers cried to him: "Stay where thou art; it is God's will that thou shouldst continue in the life that thou hast chosen."* Simon, therefore, persevered in his extra-ordinary way of living, with greater security of doing the divine will. Obedience is therefore the most unmistakable mark of the Spirit of God, which distinguishes it from every other false and counterfeit spirit. Hence the Director should make use of it to discern the spirit by which his penitents are led, and to guide aright the souls committed to his charge.

334. Now, whatever we have said of obedience in the present Article, and of religion and devotion in the two preceding Articles, all has reference to virtues which are potential parts of justice; the first, inasmuch as it executes the orders of the lawful Superior; the second, because it renders to God due worship; the third, because it gives God His due with readiness of will. We have now to treat of the other potential virtues which belong to this cardinal virtue; but, as to treat of them with the same fulness would render our work too bulky, it will suffice to give a passing notice to each. Piety is one of the potential virtues of justice, as by it we pay to God the homage due to Him as to our Father, and, next to our parents and kindred, to our fatherland and fellow-citizens. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas.† But, he observes, the honour due to our parents is not to be paid merely by words and by outward postures of the body; it must be shown also in action, in maintaining them when in want, and in assisting them in their needs and ailments.‡ The holy Doctor

* Fortis esto, et viriliter age: videris namque divinitus ad hanc vivendi vitam perductus esse ante ignotam.

† 2, 2, qu. 101, cap. 1.

‡ Puta, si sit infirmus, quod visitetur, et ejus curationi intendatur, et si sit pauper, quod sustentetur, et sic de aliis hujusmodi: quæ omnia sub debito obsequio continentur. Ibid., art. 2.

further remarks, that if obedience to parents clash with the worship and service due to God—if, for instance, it keep from the religious state those whom God invites thereto by powerful inspiration, it is not an act of piety, since it separates us from God, to Whom the highest honour is due.* And he alleges the well-known saying of St. Jerome, in his letter to Heliodorus, who, ensnared by affection for his parents, was hesitating to embrace the monastic state: "Heliodorus, if thy mother, to keep thee with her, were to show thee the breast whereon she bore thee, and the breasts wherewith she suckled thee in thine infancy; were both father and mother to fall down before thee on the threshold of thy house, to keep thee with them,—trample manfully on thy father, trample on thy mother, and hasten to take shelter under the standard of the Cross in the sacred cloister. The greatest piety in this matter is to show oneself cruel."† Another potential part of justice is the observance by which we render honour and respect to all placed in any dignity, or who by any excellent gift are entitled to our respect and veneration. Hence this virtue requires of us to reverence princes who govern us in time of peace, and officers who command in time of war. We pay homage to Superiors, both because they are in a certain position of dignity, through the jurisdiction that they have over us, and, further, because they exercise this jurisdiction for our advantage; we give honour and distinction to masters, both because they themselves excel in learning, and because they impart it to us; we show esteem and respect to all who excel in learning, goodness of life, or in any other natural or supernatural endowment. Another potential virtue of justice is Truthfulness, by which we manifest to others, both in speaking and writing, and by other signs, what we have in our minds. How great is the advantage of this virtue, may be gathered from the fact that it maintains among men that intercourse, which could not exist apart from the truthful expression

* Si ergo cultus parentum abstrahat nos a cultu Dei, jam non est pietatis parentum insistere cultui contra Deum. Ibid., art. 4.

† Unde Hieronymus dicit in epistolâ ad Heliodorum: Percalcatum perge patrem, percalcatam perge matrem; siccis oculis ad vexillum crucis evola. Summum genus pietatis est, in hâc re esse crudelem.

of their inner thoughts. Suppose men were to speak differently from what they have in their minds, there could no longer be among them any rational intercourse; still less would contracts, bargains, agreements, exchanges be possible; since men's words would not command that credence which is the very soul of all business. We may further appreciate the advantage of this virtue by the turpitude of the opposite vice; since no greater reproach can be addressed to any honest man than to be held for a deceiver and a liar. Gratitude is also a potential part of justice, which requires two things: First, that we respond to the benefit received, with the inner affection of our soul, according to the precept of Seneca, "Would you be grateful, receive a favour with a benignant heart."* Secondly, it must compensate the benefit conferred, with another equivalent to it, or rather, as St. Thomas says, with a greater one; as to render a mere equivalent seems rather the discharge of a debt than the return of a grateful heart. Whoever would attain to perfection must not neglect any virtue, still less that of gratitude, which takes root even in the heart of brutes, which, as we may see by experience, very frequently show gratitude towards those who use them well. Vengeance is another potential part of justice, not indeed that which seeks another's evil on account of the outrage and insult done to us—for this springs from hatred and spite, which are always unlawful, as being inconsistent with charity. Vengeance, when virtuous is, as St. Thomas teaches, that disposition by which we seek the chastisement of others for their correction, or for the restraint of evil-doers, or, again, for the sake of peace, and as an example to others, out of pure love for justice or zeal for God's honour. It requires also the presence of other conditions and circumstances—as, for instance, that vengeance be executed by those in authority, such as princes, judges, and other lawful Superiors, but not by private persons; to whom it does not belong to punish the evil deeds of others, but to compassionate such when done to their neighbours, to bear with them when done to themselves.† As a last instance of a

* Vis reddere beneficium? benigne accipe. Lib. ij., De Benefic., cap. 35.

† Si vero intentio vindicantis feratur principaliter in aliquod bonum, ad quod pervenitur per pœnam peccantis, puta ad emendationem peccantis, vel saltem

potential virtue of justice, we may adduce Liberality, which renders a man open-handed in the use of wealth, and inclines him to use it for the advantage of others more than for his own selfish ends. These several virtues are not justice in its strict sense, since they are not concerned with a legal and rigorously binding debt; yet may they be termed potential parts of justice, in that they all of them regard a something strictly due to our neighbours, and so far forth coincide with justice, and should be striven after by all who would acquire this cardinal virtue in its perfection.

ARTICLE VIII.

On the Virtue of Patience.

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN THIS VIRTUE CONSISTS, IN WHAT IT IS DISTINCT FROM FORTITUDE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACQUIRING IT.

335. It will be impossible to understand in what the virtue of Patience consists, unless we master the difference existing between those two strong passions which exercise great tyranny over the heart of man—namely, fear and sadness. Fear is an ignoble passion awakened within us by the imagination of an evil yet distant but which is apprehended as likely to befall us; sadness is another passion which is excited not by the mere forecasting, but by the actual experience, of a present infliction. Thus, a criminal, on the discovery of his crime, fears the imprisonment which is likely to be his lot, and hence withdraws himself and takes to

ad cohibitionem ejus et quietem aliorum, et ad justitiæ conservationem, et Dei honorem, potest esse licita vindicatio, aliis debitis circumstantiis. 2, 2, q. 108, a. 1.

flight and concealment. But when justice lays her hands upon him, and confines him in a narrow cell, he no longer fears the durance, which is now an actual fact, but he grieves on account of it. He fears only the future punishment that awaits him, and when the time for that comes, fear will again give place to sadness. Now both these passions (as we are all but too well aware by a sad experience) are a great hindrance to the practice of Christian virtue, because they are tumultuous passions, they greatly disturb our reason and easily drive it to vicious extremes, instead of allowing it to follow its own dictates. Wherefore God has endowed us with two great virtues, which enable us to bridle these turbulent emotions that, like wild beasts, so frequently rise within the citadel of our hearts to wage war upon us. One of these is fortitude, which keeps us firm and unmoved against fear, especially fear of tremendous evils, as of death and torture,—as we have before explained in the third Article. The second is patience, which moderates the sadness occasioned by present evils, and makes us bear them in calm and peace, as St. Augustine says.* So that we may assert, without fear of error, that patience consists in an equality of soul which banishes from it the sadness occasioned by present adversity. Whence we may infer that, in a certain sense, patience is a part of fortitude, though not a principal part—the latter being a virtue of itself, special and distinct from every other virtue, but yet a secondary part or, as St. Thomas styles it, a potential part; since, though the proper function of fortitude, and indeed its main office, is to restrain the fear of impending evils, lest they withdraw the will from the path of virtue, a man cannot claim to be looked upon as endowed with perfect fortitude, if, when these evils befall him, he is unable to moderate the sadness, grief, and gloom which they occasion. Now, this very thing it is which forms the character of the virtue of patience. Hence it may be affirmed that patience is the companion of fortitude, which assists, supports, and, when need is, completes its vigour.†

* Patientia hominis recta est, atque laudabilis, et vocabulo digna virtutis ea perhibetur, qua æquo animo mala toleramus, nec animo iniquo bona desideramus, per quæ ad meliora perveniamus. Lib. Patient., cap. 2.

† Dicendum, quod actus fortitudinis non solum consistit in hoc, quod ali-

Wherefore the view taken by the Angelic Doctor is fully established.*

336. It may further be inferred that the virtue of patience has for its sole object to mitigate, soften, and assuage the sorrow, the gloom, the heart-sickness which present trials ever awaken within us, whether these trials proceed from poverty, sickness, from the death of our nearest relatives or dearest friends, or in the loss of honour, goods, health, or from any other evil that may befall us. This may be made plainer by what Plutarch relates of Agesilaus.† This Spartan was stretched on his bed, racked with a violent fit of gout. Carneades, a friend of his, came to see him, and on beholding his feet all swollen and red with inflammation, unable to bear with the sight of such poignant suffering, he was about to take his leave. But Agesilaus called to him: "Stay, Carneades, the pain in my feet has not yet reached the heart."‡ This is the function of patience, to hinder our trials from reaching and overwhelming the heart, and so to moderate them that the soul may remain calm and at peace.

337. That patience is requisite for Christian perfection may not be questioned, as it is plainly asserted by the Apostle, who says: *For you have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God you may receive the promise.*§ The reason of this necessity is given by the Angelic Doctor, who lays it down that there is nothing which so impedes reason and paralyses the will for good, as sadness. How many, through sadness, have lost power

quis in bono persistat contra timores futurorum periculorum; sed etiam ut non deficiat propter præsentium tristitiam, sive dolorem: et ex hâc parte habet affinitatem cum fortitudine patientia. Et tamen fortitudo est principaliter contra timores, ad quorum rationem pertinet fugere, quod vivat fortitudo. Patientia vero principalius est circa tristitias. Nam patiens dicitur aliquis non ex hoc quod non fugit, sed quod laudabiliter se habet in patiendo quæ præsentialiter nocent, ut scilicet non inordinate ex eis tristetur. 2, 2, q. 136, art. 4, ad 2.

* Patientia est pars fortitudinis quasi potentialis, quia adjungitur fortitudini, sicut virtus secundaria primariæ.

† In Lacon.

‡ Carneades, nihil enim illinc huc pervenit.

§ Patientia vobis necessaria est, ut voluntatem Dei facientes, reportetis repromissionem. Ad Hebr. x. 36.

over their reason, and have become frenzied and lunatics! What numbers who, driven beside themselves by sadness, have put an end to their own existence! Nor is this to be wondered at; since nothing so overclouds the mind with its gloom, or so stupefies the will with its icy grasp, nothing renders it so heavy and torpid, as melancholy. Hence it is necessary that, in seasons of trial (from which none are exempt in this miserable life) there should be a virtue which may banish so harmful an emotion from the soul, dissipate its darkness, thaw its frost, shake off its heaviness, keep reason on the alert and the will in readiness for the practice of virtue. As we have heretofore shown, this virtue is none other but patience.*

338. Another reason alleged by St. Bernard, helps to show the great importance of patience for Christian perfection. "If," he says, "the trials wherewith God visits us are borne with patience, they beat down the pride of the flesh, and strengthen the virtue of the soul; the flesh is thereby reduced and weakened, while the mind, rising on the pinions of virtue, soars to heavenly things, the body loses its superfluities, and the spirit acquires the virtues of which it stood in want and becomes perfect."† Of a truth, experience shows that trials borne with patience are like a whetstone, on which virtue is polished, refined, and rendered more beauteous. Wherefore the Apostle St. James, wishing to form Christians to a complete perfection, to which nothing is wanting, thinks it sufficient to exhort them to patience.‡

* Inter alias passiones, tristitia efficax est ad impediendum bonum rationis, secundum illud, ad Cor. ii., Sæculi tristitia mortem operatur; et Eccli. xxx., Multos occidit tristitia, et non est utilitas in illâ. Unde necesse est habere aliquam virtutem, per quam bonum rationis conservetur contra tristitiam, ne scilicet ratio tristitiæ succumbat. Hoc autem facit patientia.

† Flagellis Domini pinguedo carnalis voluptatis atteritur, et virtutes animæ roborantur: caro quod superfluum erat, amittit, et spiritus virtutes, quas non habebat, acquirit. Serm. 10, in Cœnâ Domini.

‡ Omne gaudium existimate, fratres mei, cum in tentationes varias incideritis, scientes quod probatio vestræ fidei patientiam operatur. Patientia autem opus perfectum habet, ut sitis perfecti et integri, in nullo deficientes.

CHAPTER II.

A CONSIDERATION THAT MAY GREATLY HELP US TO BEAR OUR CROSSES WITH PATIENCE.

339. ADVERSITY has its uses for each and every one. Either you are a sinner, or you are a just man but lukewarm, or you are a just man and fervent. Look to yourself, for in what state soever you may chance to be, adversity will be for you a healing balm, a remedy to preserve and invigorate your health. If a sinner, you are wrong to be downcast amid the temporal woes wherewith God chastens you, as these are the remedy of your disease. "Sin," says St. John Chrysostom, "is for the soul a most loathsome ulcer: adversity is the knife of the surgeon to work its cure. Now, even as one who has a mortified limb is in the greatest danger, unless it be cut off; so too the sinner, unless smitten by the sword of tribulation, falls into the lowest depths of ruin and perdition."* If, then, the sick man willingly allows the surgeon to press his sore, in order to squeeze out the evil humours; permits him to cut away with sharp knife the diseased flesh; does not object to the afflicted part being cauterised with burning iron; how much more ready should we be to allow God to cure the deadly wounds of our souls with the iron and fire of adversity, lest they mortify and bring us to death everlasting.

340. There was never a greater crime than that committed by the sons of Jacob against their young brother Joseph. They conspired to murder the guileless boy. Their plan was to lower him into a dry well, and let him starve to death. They sold him as a vile slave, for a few pieces of money, to unknown traders, and sent him to a strange land to spend his days amid countless miseries. What cruelty, what barbarity, what hard-heartedness! Yet see how they become soft and tender, and melt into tears, when smitten by God with the rod of tribulation. *They said one*

* Peccatum, sanies est; pœna ferrum medicinale: sicut igitur saniem habens, si non secatur, est in majoribus malis; ita peccans, si non puniatur, omnium est miserrimus. Hom. 6 ad Pop. Antioch.

*to another, we deserve to suffer these things, for we are truly guilty concerning our brother.** It was adversity that opened their eyes for them to repentance and to tears. Who was ever prouder than Nabuchodonosor, that would not bow his haughty head even unto God? But having been condemned to feed on the grass like an ox, in company with the beasts of the field, he bowed down his head when visited by so dire an affliction and so great a humiliation; he adored the Divine Majesty, and magnified the greatness of the Almighty One.† And what was it that brought to his senses the Prodigal Son in the Gospel parable, that youth who, true type of the sinner as he was, left his father's house with so much arrogance? Was it not hunger, thirst, nakedness, and the extreme destitution to which he was in the end reduced? Was it not by means of these that he was led to return to his fond father's embrace, that his eyes shed tears of repentance, that he exclaimed with such heartfelt compunction, *I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am no longer worthy to be called thy son?* Hence may we conclude, with St. Augustine, that adversity is for sinners a healing medicine, which God, as a merciful physician, offers to them to heal their deadly wounds, and to restore them to everlasting health.‡ Wherefore, though the cup be never so bitter, if you are conscious of grievous faults you should accept it willingly at the kindly hands of the Lord, and take the draught with peace without disquiet or sadness, murmur or complaint, if you desire your own welfare and are not in love with your own ruin.

341. If, however, you are just, though lukewarm, instead of being troubled at your misfortunes, you should heartily thank God, Who sends them to you in order to detach you from the world and its vain delights, which you have suffered to lure you from the path of perfection. God is dealing with you as mothers do with their tender babes when they wean them, who smear their

* Merito hæc patimur, quia peccavimus in fratrem nostrum. Gen. xlij. 21.

† Ego Nabuchodonosor oculos meos ad cœlum levavi, et sensus meus redditus est mihi. Altissimo benedixi, et viventem sempiternum laudavi, et glorificavi. Dan. iv. 31.

‡ Intelligat homo medicum esse Deum, et tribulationem medicamentum esse ad salutem, non pœnam ad damnationem. In Ps. xxj.

breasts with something bitter, that the taste may disgust the infants. Thus, too, does God, by means of the tribulations with which He visits you, embitter for you those earthly goods to which you are so closely attached, be they wealth, honours, amusements, vain delights; in order that, losing your relish and affection for them, you may arise from the dangerous lukewarmness in which you now slumber. St. Augustine aptly observes, on this point: "God mingles the gall of contradiction and affliction with the delights of this world, and still you love it.* He troubles the waters of earthly gratifications with the various mischances which He showers down upon the world, and yet you eagerly drink of those waters. He scatters amid the flowers of human pleasures the thorns of disappointment which prick you, and you go on gathering them. What, then, would you do, if things here below were to go on according to your whim, without any mischance? You would be wholly absorbed in them, you would wax cold and, ere long, would become a hardened sinner. Submit, therefore, in time of trouble to the divine will, adore the counsels of God's providence: He orders everything for your advantage, and hence, far from lamenting, comfort yourself with the reflection, that while you live in such heedlessness of your welfare, God takes thought for it, with so much love."

342. We read in the lives of the illustrious men of the Cistercian Order, that a monk, who, little by little, had fallen from his first fervour, bethought himself of leaving the house of God, to return to the fleshpots of Egypt. One night, while asleep, he beheld in a dream St. Malachy and St. Bernard who, approaching his couch, eyed him with a severe look. St. Malachy, then turning to St. Bernard, said: "This fellow no longer has any good in him; he has become dissatisfied and full of disquiet, and is even now planning his flight from the monastery." At these words, St. Bernard replied in Scripture phrase: "Full well do I know that affliction alone can make him to understand doctrine."† He then began to beat him severely with the staff he held in his hand. The monk, on awaking, found himself bruised and sore all over

* O infelicitas generis humani! amarus est mundus, et diligitur. Puta si dulcis esset, qualiter amaretur? Serm. III de Temp.

† Scio, scio, quod sola vexatio intellectum dabit auditui. Isai. xxviij. 19.

his body. He called the Prior, begged pardon for his evil intent, and continued to lead in the monastery the life of a good Religious. Now, God deals with you in like manner. He knows, and of His own Mouth has He said it, that affliction makes persons who have strayed from the right path enter into themselves, open their eyes to their lukewarmness, and make efforts to shake it off. Wherefore He smites you now and then with the rod of tribulation.* On your part you must receive the strokes with patient submission and, far from spitefully biting, must kiss the hand that so lovingly chastens you, with a filial resignation.

343. If, lastly, you are not only just, but fervent and earnest in the service of God, then must you bear in patience, nay, indeed with gladness, the trials that befall you; and you must account them as great favours, since they are the crucible in which virtuous souls are purified from the dross of their failings and refined in perfection. This is clearly stated in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: *Whatsoever is brought upon thee, take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art brought to a low estate, for gold and silver are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of affliction.*† And, in another place, the same inspired writer says again, "The potter's vessel is proved in the furnace, and men are tried by the proof of tribulation whether they be of good temper."‡ Affliction is the whetstone on which virtue is sharpened, the hammer under which, by blows of sorrow, our virtue is beaten out and enlarged for the day of eternity.

344. Behold that tree growing on the mountain top and exposed to all the inclemency of the weather. Do you not feel tempted to pity its hard lot, at seeing it shaken by the winds, assailed by storms, swept over by tempests? Yet from these very shocks it gains greater firmness, for the more it is beaten by the storm the deeper root does it strike in the soil. Look at that

* Vexatio intellectum dabit auditui.

† Omne quod tibi applicitum fuerit, accipe, et in dolore sustine; et in humilitate tuâ patientiam habe: quoniam in igne probatur aurum et argentum, homines vero receptibiles in camino humiliationis. Ecclus. ij. 4.

‡ Vasa figuli probat fornax, et homines justos tentatio tribulationis. Ecclus. xxvij. 6.

corn, beaten and crushed beneath the stroke of the heavy flail. Does it not move you to pity? Yet under these heavy blows it is cleansed from the beard, the chaff and the dust, and it becomes precious grain. Thus too, virtue, beaten by raging persecution, shaken by frightful temptations, takes deeper root in the soul; struck down by illness, sufferings, infirmities, misfortunes and disasters, it is purified and rendered more perfect. Abraham was a godly man, yet it was necessary that his virtue should be tried by the immolation of his only-begotten son. Isaac was holy, yet he too was to be tried by having to offer himself as the victim of this great sacrifice. Tobias was a saint and hence had to be proved by the trial of a long and wearisome blindness. Job was likewise a saint, and therefore was he made the sport of the most fearful trials, being stripped of his goods, his house, his children, his health, and of all that he had. David was well-pleasing to God, and on that account was exposed to the persecutions of Saul, the rebellion of Absalom, the outrages of Semei, and many other calamitous mishaps; for, as St. Paul says, *Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives:* for He desires to see us perfect in every virtue.* "Wherefore," St. Augustine warns us, "if we wish to be spared the blows which the loving hand of our heavenly Father inflicts upon us, let us understand clearly that at the same time we should be rejected from the number of His sons."†

345. Even Seneca, by the mere light of nature, attained to the knowledge of this truth, and expresses it by saying that God deals with us as a master deals with his scholars, a chieftain with his soldiers, a parent with his children. The master sets more difficult tasks to those scholars whom he knows to be the furthest advanced, in order that they may derive greater profit. A general exposes the soldiers whose bravery he has tested, to the most hazardous and arduous enterprises, because he awaits a prosperous

* Quem diligit Dominus castigat, flagellat autem omnem filium, quem recipit. Hebr. xij. 6.

† Flagellat Deus omnen. filium, quem recipit et tu forte exceptus eris? Si exceptus es a passione flagellorum, exceptus es a numero filiorum. De Pastorib.

issue. A father is more severe with the children whom he loves the most, as he desires to see them more docile and virtuous than the rest. "So too, does God, with a purpose of rendering them more robust in virtue, expose to hardship and trial those whom He wishes to render the most faithful soldiers in His army, the most diligent learners in His school, the most favourite children of His family."*

346. Why, then, when visited by God with affliction, give way to melancholy, to low-heartedness, to discouragement? knowing, as you must, that it is not out of hate, but out of love, that God so deals with you; being convinced that He takes no delight in seeing you sorrowful, but wishes only to see you perfect;—affliction being the short and sure road to attain perfection speedily? Abbot Moses, having met with a monk called Zachary, asked him to tell him what he should do to acquire perfection. The latter, confused and full of astonishment at such a question, fell at his feet, saying, "Why, Father Abbot, do you ask that of me which I ought to learn of you?"—"Wonder not," replied the Abbot, "for, as I have seen the Holy Ghost descend upon you, I am obliged to put you this question." Finding himself thus compelled, Zachary drew off his cowl, and, casting it on the ground, began to trample it underfoot, saying, "Until one is thus trodden underfoot by temptations and crosses, he cannot be a perfect monk."† So, too, as long as you have not been the butt of many tribulations, you cannot hope to make much progress in Christian perfection. Bear, then, patiently with affliction in its divers shapes; and the more you find yourself burdened, the closer will you cleave unto God by a holy conformity to His will: as we are taught in the Book of Ecclesiasticus.‡

* Hanc rationem sequitur Deus in bonis viris, quam in discipulis suis præceptores, qui plus laboris ab iis exigunt, in quibus certior est spes, et quam in militibus duces, qui optimos milites ad durissima mittunt. . . . Ut severi parentes filios durius educant, ita Deus suos, idque ut inde a doloribus et damnis colligant robur. De Constant. Sapient.

† Ex Lib. Doctr. PP., De Obedient., n. 7.

‡ Sustine sustentationes Dei, conjungere Deo, et sustine, ut crescat in novissimo vita tua. Ecclus. ij. 3.

CHAPTER III.

HOW MUCH THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST OUGHT TO STIMULATE US TO PATIENCE UNDER TRIALS.

347. "Christ," says the Prince of the Apostles, "suffered that He might set an example of patience. He walked along a road beset with thorns, in order that we might walk after Him, following in His footsteps."* This should be a powerful incitement to us to bear up against every trial with calm and peace; for, to speak truly, what tribulation can ever befall us, which our most dear Redeemer has not suffered in a greater degree? If it is your lot to be tried with pain and grievous infirmities, think how much more severe were the pains, how much more atrocious the torments, which Christ underwent for your sake. Are you in poverty? Christ chose to be yet more destitute, and even in beggary for the love of you. You may have lost a law-suit, or may have been deprived of your property, but Christ was stripped of His very garments, and left hanging naked on the Cross. You are forsaken by your friends, but He was abandoned by His disciples. Your honour has been wounded by a grievous outrage, but still you have not been made the sport of a vile rabble, you have not, as He was, been trampled upon as a loathsome worm. You are persecuted, yet not as He, nor with such shameless injustice hunted to death. You have been betrayed, but not, as your Saviour was, by an Apostle whom He had loaded with benefits. What misfortune so bitter can befall you, in the whole course of your life, that you cannot take heart to put up with in peace of soul, after the example of your Saviour? "For," as St. Cyprian observes, "the whole life of our Saviour was a continual exercise of unconquered patience; nor was there one of His actions but was accompanied by this so lovely a virtue."† If, then, Christ suffered everything for you, cannot

* Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus. 1 Pet. ij. 21.

† Actus ejus ab ipso statim adventu patientiâ comite signantur. Lib. de Bono Patientiæ.

you, for love of Him, suffer something in patience? He is your Creator, you are His creature. He the Sovereign Lord, you His subject. He is the Master, you His slave. He is God, and you a worm of the earth. He is Everything, and you are nothing.

348. Abimelech, after having destroyed the town of Sichem and sown it with salt, wishing to master the citadel, determined to reduce it by the aid of fire. As this plan demanded that whole groves of trees and shrubs should be heaped at the foot of the walls, he led his army to the top of Mount Selmon, where there grew a vast and thick forest. Here, seizing a hatchet, he cut down an enormous branch, and, hoisting it on his shoulders, went towards the castle of Sichem, saying, "What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done."* At this noble example, you might have seen the highest captains and nobles, officers as well as soldiers, hatchet in hand, cutting down trunks and branches, vieing with one another in carrying their burdens, each one convinced that his glory was the greatest who bore the heaviest load, and all joyously following their chief.†

349. We have here a lively figure of what our blessed Saviour did for us. He saw that the miserable earth on which we dwell is, so to speak, covered, sown broadcast with crosses. He knew that it was not possible to live in this vale of tears and in this painful exile, without trials and afflictions, grief and bitterness. What, then, did our good Captain do to encourage us to endurance? He took upon His own divine shoulders, the heaviest, the most weighty Cross, the Cross most full of pain; and, turning to us His soldiers, enrolled under His banner, He addresses us in the terms which Abimelech used to his men: "Do what you see Me do. Behold Me, laden with the Cross, groaning under its crushing weight, languishing and dying upon it. He who would boast of being My follower, let him take up his Cross, follow Me, tread in My footsteps, and become like unto Me.‡ Whoever has not on

* Quod me videtis facere, cito facite. Judic. ix. 48.

† Igitur certatim ramos de arboribus præcidentes, sequebantur ducem, Ibid.

‡ Qui vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me. Matth. xvj. 4.

his shoulders the mark of the Cross shall never be acknowledged by Me for one of Mine." Can it be that, with the example of so noble a leader before us, a single person can be found who shrinks from willingly bearing the Cross, however burdensome, painful, disgraceful it may be, and however great be the privation of worldly goods which it may imply? Shall it be said that, after so illustrious an example, there are any who grieve, lament, sigh, complain under the weight of their own Cross, and who, instead of bearing it with loving patience, drag it after them by compulsion? Will, then, the example of an Abimelech avail more to encourage his soldiers to endurance, than the wondrous example of patience set us by the Divine Redeemer?

350. Let it never be told of us that we care so little for Christ, that we make so little account of the most illustrious actions which He performed for our example, and that we show Him so little love. Let us often ponder what He has suffered for us, and the unconquerable patience with which He suffered; and let us do this in particular when tribulations assail us, in order that we may reproduce in ourselves the features of His wondrous endurance. As painters fix their gaze on the object they wish to imitate, and writers on the originals which they have to transcribe, so should we keep the eye of the mind fixed on Christ, either groaning under the load of the Cross, or hanging upon it in agony, or pierced with a thorny crown, flayed with stripes, persecuted and condemned unjustly, outraged in word and deed. The sight of these sufferings will stir up within us a certain wish to imitate Him, and this will render suffering sweet, or, at least, less grievous. Such was the advice the Apostle gave to the Hebrews when he wrote to them: *For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.**

351. A young man, who had been brought up amid the convenience and luxury of his own home, embraced the religious state in a very austere monastery. But, after a while, his fervour having waxed cold, he began to find the bread coarse, the wine sour, the habit rough, his cell narrow, obedience burdensome

* Recogitate eum, qui talem sustinuit a peccatoribus adversus semetipsum contradictionem, ut ne fatigemini, animis vestris deficientes. Ad Hebr. xij. 3.

his brethren unbearable, the rule insupportable. Overcome at length by weariness of soul, he asked the Superior's leave to return to his father's house. "Son," replied the latter, "it is no longer the time for thee to draw back, as thou hast bound thyself by solemn vow to spend thy life in the cloister. Do thou rather have recourse to God, Who will strengthen thee, as He has strengthened so many others, to endure patiently the hardships of Religious Life." Being encouraged by these words, the monk put away all thoughts of leaving. But being shortly after tempted, either by his own weakness or by the devil, he threw off the religious habit without taking counsel of any one, and, resuming the secular garb, took to flight. On his road, Jesus Christ appeared to him under the figure of a handsome youth, who followed him, saying, "Stop; wait for Me; not so fast. I want to accompany you." The fugitive, fearing discovery, ran all the faster. But, overcome at length by the words and entreaties of the stranger, he stopped. Our Blessed Lord asked him, "Whither art thou going in such haste?" The fugitive sharply replied, "I suppose thou thinkest that thou art my father! What concern hast thou with any business of mine? What matter is it to thee where I am going?" Our Lord pacified him little by little with gentle words, and, by searching questions, brought him at last to own that he was flying from his monastery to return to the secular life. Then, opening His vesture in front, Christ uncovered His breast, and showed him the wound in His side whence the blood was trickling, and said to him: "Return, My son, to the monastery, and when, for the future, the bread seems coarse, dip it into this side pierced for love of thee, and it will become delicate; the sour wine, mingled with this Blood, will taste sweet; thy rough habit, if dipped into this wound, will feel soft to thee. In this opened side, obedience, compunction, regular observance, will have a savoury relish." At this vision, and at these words, the fugitive monk was touched, and went back again; and making for the future his abode in the wound of his Saviour's side, he endured with much patience all the hardships of the cloister, and lived in holiness all the remainder of his days.*

* Spec. Exempl.—Dist. 6, Exempl. 156.

352. It were well if we always, or at least frequently, set before our eyes the wounds, sorrows and ignominies, the poverty, the wrongs and injuries, which our Redeemer endured for our sakes. How sweet, then, would we not find injustice, persecution, sickness, suffering, poverty, the loss of wealth and station, of children, of the most near and dear among our kindred! This unalterable patience of Christ, amid His unspeakable sufferings, gave endurance to the Martyrs amid their torments, to the Apostles amid their persecutions, to the Solitaries in their austerities, to the Confessors amid their many grievous adversities. This it is which has tempered the saints like steel, and armed them to bear with so many evils, to such a degree that St. Cyprian goes so far as to say that Holy Church would never have possessed St. Paul, that hero so patient under trial, had not Christ given him courage by His own great patience.* Now, this endurance of Jesus Christ has only to be steadily kept before our eyes to beget the virtue of patience even in ourselves.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO OTHER MOTIVES FOR PATIENCE—THE CERTAINTY OF THE REWARD IN THE NEXT LIFE AND THE NECESSI Y OF SUFFERING IN THE PRESENT.

353. NOTHING can so strengthen a man and render him patient amid sufferings, as the hope of deriving some gain from them. See the poor husbandman, how he toils, digging up the ground or furrowing it with the plough, and watering all day long his fields with the sweat of his brow! If he thus stays exposed to a broiling sun, to the violence of the winds, to the inclemencies of the weather, to rain, heat, and cold, the reason is that he is supported by the hope which he entertains of a plenteous crop. Labour may fatigue him, weariness may exhaust and deject him, but he is

* Talis est Christi, et tanta patientia, quæ nisi tanta, et talis existeret, Paulum quoque apostolum Ecclesia non haberet.

borne up in spite of all this by the hope of seeing the fields covered with corn and his granaries full of the finest wheat. Thus too, says St. Gregory, should the hope of imperishable goods encourage us to bear patiently the trials of this life, these being the seed whence shall spring the fruit of life everlasting; for, as the Psalmist says, "They who in this life sow in tears, shall reap in joy in the life to come."*

354. The more so, as the evils of the present life, if placed in contrast with the goods of the next life which we may earn by means of them, take such a form that they should be called goods rather than evils. For what proportion does there exist between present dishonour and heavenly glory, between bodily suffering and never-ending joys? What is poverty or want compared with the unfading treasures of our home above? We have it on the word of St. Paul that there is no proportion between them.† Add to this, that the sufferings of the present life are short, fleeting, momentary; while if we but bear them patiently, the glory that is to be our reward will be immortal and will never end; as the same Apostle observes.‡ And there is another ground on which they do not suffer comparison, since whatever soon passes away is nothing when compared with that which lasts for ever, and remains fixed and immovable on the basis of eternity.

355. If then—may we argue with the Apostle—if the wrestlers in the games, in order to win a perishable crown of parsley leaves, denied themselves all carnal delight, all food that could weaken them, and if they underwent great hardships,§ what ought not we to endure for an incorruptible crown, studded with stars whose light

* Sicut nemo messem sperare potest, nisi prius terram aratro proscindat; ita retributionis æternæ gaudium nequaquam in cœlo colligitur, nisi prius in terrâ cum fletu, et gemitu, et amaritudine seminetur; sicut scriptum est: Euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua: venientes autem venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos. In Psal. iii. Pœnit.

† Existimo quod non sunt condignæ passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam quæ revelabitur in vobis. Ad Rom. viij. 18.

‡ Quod in præsenti est momentaneum, et leve tribulationis nostræ, supra modum in sublimitate æternum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis. II. ad Cor. iv. 17.

§ Omnis qui in agone contendit, ab omnibus se abstinet.

is never dimmed?* And Tertullian, following the same line of argument, says, that the glory of earth, compared to that of heaven, is no more than a piece of glass set side by side with a pearl. Yet this human glory has such influence over the bodies and souls of worldlings, that to win it they shrink not from braving tortures, and death itself, inflicted by fire and sword. Wherefore to what torments and sufferings, to what sorrows and toils, should we not willingly submit, to win the true and blissful glory of eternity?†

356. It was by this hope of everlasting joy that holy Job was animated, and rendered strong in patience, when in a single moment he received on all sides the most sorrowful news; when he was told of the driving away of his flocks and herds, the slaughter of his slaves, the death of his children, the downfall of his house, and when he beheld his flesh consumed piecemeal by hideous ulcers. He at once repeated to himself: "The day will come when I shall rise again in this very body, covered as it now is with sores and overwhelmed with infirmity; I shall behold the beauteous face of my God, shall enter into His joys, and share in His boundless happiness. This hope, laid up within my breast, entertains and increases my patience, preventing it from giving way under the shock of so many evils."

357. The same hope should beget within us a godly patience in time of tribulation, and should help to banish from our hearts all despondency, and check gloom and sadness, so as to pass through all with calm and peace of soul. It is then we should lift up our eyes to heaven, and behold the immeasurable bliss that is to be the reward of our present trials, and derive thence the

* Et illi quidem ut corruptibilem coronam accipiant, nos autem incorruptam. I. ad Cor. ix. 15.

† Si tantum terrenæ gloriæ licet de corporis et animi vigore, ut gladium, ignem, crucem, bestias, tormenta contemnat sub præmio laudis humanæ; possum dicere, modicæ sunt istæ passiones ad consecutionem gloriæ cœlestis et divinæ mercedis. Tanti vitrum, quanti veram margaritam? qui ergo non libentissime tantum pro vero habeat erogare, quantum alii pro falso? Ad Martyres, cap. 4.

‡ Scio quod redemptor meus vivit, et in novissimo die de terrâ surrecturus sum. Et rursus circumdabor pelle meâ, et in carne meâ videbo Deum. Quem visurus sum ego ipse, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius: reposita est hæc spes mea in sinu meo. Job xix. 25, 26, 27.

courage to endure them with peace; as Holy Church teaches us.* If we are disappointed of some post of trust, if we have lost a lawsuit, have failed in business, or if any other misfortune come upon us and steep our hearts in bitterness, we must cast our eyes on the heavenly treasures God has in store for us. Are we an object of deadly hate to our enemies, threatened in our person, outraged in our honour, blemished in our reputation? Let us think of the honours, the starry crowns, the thrones of glory awaiting us above. Do fevers, sufferings, anguish, infirmity, lay hold of us? We will call to mind those unmixed pleasures, those joys unspeakable, that are one day to fill our heart to overflowing. How much this avails to temper the grief caused by our sufferings, and to set our hearts at rest, will be shown by the following story:

358. A soldier who had retired from the army sought diversion in sport, and having one day met with some beast of chase, set off in pursuit and hunted it all day long. As he was nearing a small coppice, he heard a gentle voice, which seemed to come from the midst of it. At first, he fancied it might be the murmuring of some light wind playing among the leaves and branches; but, by listening more intently, he became aware that it was a human voice. Wondering how, in the depth of this wild forest, there could be found one who sang so melodiously, he pushed through the thicket. Soon he discovered, stretched at full length on the ground, a man covered from head to foot with a most loathsome leprosy, and so eaten up with sores that the flesh was falling piecemeal from his bones. He shrank from the sight as much from wonder as from disgust. On recovering himself, however, he inquired whence came that full and pleasing voice which he had heard in those wilds. The leper answered: "The voice that you have heard is mine."—"But," rejoined the soldier, "how is it possible that you can rejoice amid these cruel sufferings?" "Between me and God," replied the leper, "there is but a mud-wall, which is this rotten carcass of mine. Seeing it fall to pieces, I rejoice and am glad, and I shout for joy, knowing that I shall soon go to be united with Him in everlasting happiness."† Thus does

* Ibi nostra fixa sint corda, ubi vera sunt gaudia.

† Spec. Exempl.—Dist. 9, Exempl. 138.

the thought of eternal bliss not only render bearable, but even make sweet, all the pains and all the evils of our present wretched life.

359. However, waiving all this, even if God had not awarded us so great a recompense for our sufferings, we ought to find a sufficient motive for bearing them patiently, in the unavoidable necessity in which we find ourselves of suffering, so long as we dwell in this vale of tears. Is it not better to endure quietly than to fume and fret against evil we can in nowise escape? "Remember," says St. Cyprian, "that the first thing we do in coming into this world is to wail and cry. Before we know how to do anything else, we already know how to weep. This is an impulse and a teaching of nature which moves us to mourn at the very moment of our birth, and gives us to understand that by entering into this world we plunge into an ocean of misery."* Wherefore we are not to marvel if none in this world are exempt from tribulation; for, as they who sail on the ocean, be they of high rank or low, be they rich or poor, are all alike liable to the tossing and fury of the waves; so too, they who live in the sea of mishaps, are alike subject to the alternations of good and evil fortune, of prosperity and adversity. Rachel is gifted with beauty, but she is barren. Lia has the advantage of fecundity, but is not favoured with beauty. Augustus is all-powerful, but he has no heir. Tiberius is feared, be he can call no man his friend. You are of noble birth, but you are not rich. You have ample means, but you are not of noble blood. You have plenty and to spare, but health to enjoy it fails you. You have health, but, being poor, you have to suffer want. Within doors all is quiet, but without there is an enemy of yours, who dogs your footsteps and keeps you ever on the watch. You have no enemy outside; but at home some cross-grained relative, some scapegrace of a son, or nephew, never leaves you in peace. In a word, as every corn-seed has its worm, every tree its canker, so no man in this world but has some trials. Nay more, as St. Augustine observes, "The very

* Unusquisque nostrum, cum nascitur, et hospitio hujus mundi excipitur initium sumit a lacrymis, et quamvis adhuc omnium ignarus, nihil aliud novit in illâ ipsâ primâ nativitate, quam flere.

Son of God, Who was without sin, did not live free from the scourge."*

360. Nor does it avail you to say, I am a prince, a king, a monarch; for the highest personages sail on this stormy sea in the same ship with ourselves; they, too, are exposed to the blasts of contrary winds, they are subject to the same perils, are involved in the same storms: like us, they are liable to treasons, hatred, detraction, loss of property, infirmity, sorrows, disappointment, sufferings and death; only their cares are more weighty, their reverses greater, their anguish more poignant. For the happiness of this life does not consist in exemption from trouble—this is impossible—but in bearing the mishaps that befall us with a calm and patient soul. And the hardship of our lot does not depend so much in the evils that are outside us, as in the hurt we take from our own impatience; from the sadness, the trouble, the disquiet, the bitterness of soul which come of not submitting willingly to the mischances that befall us. Take away the agitation we cause to ourselves, and tribulation will be a thorn that pricks yet wounds not, a sword that strikes but inflicts no deep injury. Thus too, if we wish to be content here below and happy in the world to come, let us make a virtue of necessity and, as we cannot escape trials, let us accept them with a good heart, for the motives explained above.

CHAPTER V.

EXAMPLES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN TO ANIMATE US TO PATIENCE.

361. Reasons move us to the practice of virtue, and example constrains us to embrace it.† Nor is this power of example exerted only in the case of rude and uncultivated men; it is no less efficacious with those who have the gift of knowledge and discretion.

* Etiam unicus, qui fuit sine peccato, non tamen sine flagello. In Ps. xxxj. Enarr. 2.

† Verba movent, exempla trahunt.

In the instance of St. Augustine, while yet the slave of incontinence, how powerful was the example of so many youths and maidens who found no difficulty in foregoing those pleasures which he rated it such a hardship to renounce. But he shall speak for himself.—"There appeared to me the chaste dignity of Continence, serene, yet not relaxedly gay, honestly alluring me to come, and doubt not; and stretching forth to receive and embrace me, her holy hands full of multitudes of good examples. There were very many young men and maidens there, a multitude of youth and every age, grave widows and aged virgins; and Continence herself withal, not barren, but a *fruitful mother of children* of joys, by Thee, her Husband, O Lord. And she smiled on me with a persuasive mockery, as if she would say, Canst not thou do what these youths and these maidens are able to do? or indeed have they the power in themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God?"* The example of so many made such an impression on the heart of Augustine, that, a mighty storm of tears arising in his heart, he was forced to leave his friend Alypius, who was by his side, to give free vent to his agitation. Then it was that God, seeing him so well disposed, gave, by a voice from heaven, the last assault whereby He took possession of that noble soul, and conquered this great hero for Holy Church.

362. Now, I will employ the same means with my reader—I will set forth to him instances of heroic patience under every tribulation, fully hoping that the argument which triumphed so completely over the heart of Augustine—*Canst thou not do what these young men and maidens have done?*—will be no less successful with him who may chance to read this. To begin, then. What is this trial of yours which overwhelms you and makes you lose patience? Is it some temporal loss that has befallen you by chance, or, what is worse, by the treachery and malice of another? I can bring forward St. Remigius, who may console by a wondrous

* Casta dignitas continentiæ serena, et non dissolute hilaris, honeste blandiens ut venirem, neque dubitarem. Ibi tot pueri, et puellæ; ibi juventus multa, et omnis ætas, et graves viduæ, et virgines anus. Et irridebat me irrisione exhortatoriâ, quasi diceret: Tu non poteris quod isti, et istæ? Conf., lib. viij., cap. 11.

instance of patience of which he gave proof in the like circumstances. He had stored up a large quantity of grain as a provision for the scarcity which he foresaw was imminent. Evil-minded persons, out of envy for the good of their neighbours, set fire to his granaries. The Saint, as soon as he heard the distressing news, mounted his horse, and hastened to put out the fire and prevent a public calamity. But seeing that the flames had enveloped everything, and that it was impossible to check their progress, he calmly got off his horse and, warming himself at the conflagration, observed with great calmness of countenance and heart: "A fire is always pleasant."* Again, we have St. Bernard, who showed no less greatness of soul in a like misadventure. The Saint was robbed by brigands of two hundred pounds of silver, which had been given to him for the building of one of his monasteries. At the news of a loss so great and so prejudicial to his Order, he was in nowise disturbed; nor did he show any emotion, but calmly observed: "Thank God for having lightened me of so great a load." We have also Libertinus, Abbot of the monastery at Fondi, who was robbed by the Goths of the horse which he was riding, and violently dragged off his saddle; yet, as St. Gregory bears record, he was not grieved at this loss but, with the greatest equanimity, presented the robbers with the whip with which he guided the beast of which he had been so rudely deprived.† Have you not reason, then, to behave, if not with the like patience, at least without positive impatience, in the temporal losses and mischances that may befall you?

363. But if the losses you have to bear are of greater importance, such as ill-success in a law-suit in which much was at stake, or the failure of business, or the diminution of your income, or even the wholesale ruin of your family, you may at once receive consolation and instruction from the case of Job; for when he was stripped of lands, houses, flocks and herds, revenues and slaves, he neither grieved nor despaired but, prostrate on the ground,

* Semper bonus est focus. Surius, apud Aureol., cap. 7.

† Qui jumenti perditi damnum libenter ferens, etiam flagellum quod tenebat diripientibus obtulit, dicens: Tollite, ut habeatis qualiter hoc jumentum minare valeatis. Dial., lib. 1, cap. 2.

adored the counsels of Divine Providence, saying: *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.** And, having spoken thus, he was no less content amid his great trials than he had been in his bygone prosperity. You have, moreover, an encouragement in the holy king Ezechias who, on hearing of the loss of all his treasures, and of the plunder of his palace, foretold to him by the prophet Isaias, in punishment of his having vainly paraded them before the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, did not grieve nor lose his peace of mind, but, submitting to the most righteous decrees of divine justice, calmly replied: *Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken.*† Take heart by the example of the High-priest Eli who, on receiving from God, by the mouth of Samuel, notice of the loss of the priesthood and of the ruin of his house, yielded not to excess of grief but, conforming at once to the divine will, said: *It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth to Him good.*‡ And under the new law we are encouraged by the example of a St. Eustace, an officer in Trajan's army who, from being the leader of squadrons, was reduced to plough the fields and water the soil with the sweat of his brow; yet was no less cheerful under his extreme poverty than he had been in the days of his military command.§ Further, we have St. Frances of Rome who, on beholding the ruin of her house through the confiscation of her goods and the loss of all her means, instead of desponding, as others would have done, continued to repeat with admirable calm the words of Job—*The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away.*‖ Such was the patience wherewith these great souls, even when sunk in the depths of destitution, bore with the loss of their fortune. *Why, then, canst thou not do what these young men and maidens have done?*

364. But if the trial which agitates your heart, rend it so that

* Corruens in terram adoravit, et dixit: Nudus egressus sum de utero matris meæ, et nudus revertar illuc. Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit: sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est: sit nomen Domini benedictum. Job i. 21.

† Bonus sermo Domini, quem locutus es. IV. Reg. xx. 19.

‡ Dominus est: quod bonum est in oculis suis, faciat. I. Reg. iij. 18.

§ Surius; Novemb. 2.

‖ Vita S. Franc. Rom.

you cannot be comforted: if you have suffered loss of honour; if your enemies have tarnished your good name by grievous detraction or false charges and slanders;—how many examples will you not find in sacred history to console you, the thought of which may help to banish all sorrow and grief from your heart? You may take comfort by St. John Chrysostom, who, in a Council held at Chalcedon, was accused of being a lover of women, lecherous and unchaste, a seducer of the people, a usurper of Bishoprics belonging to others; who was denounced for wasting the revenues of the Church, for blaspheming the name of Christ, and was even compared to the traitor Judas, and stigmatised as unworthy of being accounted as a Catholic Bishop. Yet he bore all this with a patient and imperturbable mind. You may be comforted by an Athanasius, who was held up as an adulterer, a murderer, a magician; and whose life was sought by his enemies, with implacable hate, for the space of many years. You may be consoled by St. Cyril of Alexandria, condemned as a heretic by a Council of forty Bishops, and deposed; by a St. Basil, accused of heresy at the bar of Pope Damasus, by whom he was for some time even judged unworthy of a letter. All these, I say, may comfort you by their heroic patience, and by their calm manner of bearing the unjust and base slanders with which jealous rivals and gainsayers tarnished their fair fame; and you may learn from them how to behave yourself in the like circumstances.

365. If all this suffice not to pacify your heart, so grievously wounded by the loss of that honour which you so justly prize, I will adduce another example of heroic patience in bearing with an atrocious slander invented by fiendish malice. A monk, as Cassian relates,* being envious of the sanctity of Paphnutius, devised a scheme for dimming its brightness by the most wicked plot that could enter into the mind of man. He secretly hid one of his books in the cell of Paphnutius; and the next time the monks met together in church, made complaint, in the presence of all the Community, of the loss of his book, and demanded that all the cells might be forthwith searched for the discovery of the thief. The monks were astonished that one of their number

* Collat. xviij. 15.

should be found capable of so grievous a sin, and they forthwith deputed some of the most ancient and accredited of their body, who, on making a diligent search in all the cells, found the book where the treacherous slanderer had put it; namely, in the cell of Paphnutius. On their return to the church, where the brethren awaited them, they branded the guileless youth as a thief, showing the stolen article which had been found in his cell. Paphnutius, conscious of his innocence, deliberated a while, quite beside himself with astonishment, and then determined not to make any excuse but, falling prostrate, he confessed himself to be the culprit, and asked to be admitted to penance. He was rebuked with all the severity called for by a fault so unusual among these Religious, was banished for a fortnight from all intercourse with the other monks, and condemned to lie prostrate at the threshold of the church, and to ask all who entered to grant him pardon for his supposed crime. But God Who always undertakes the defence of the innocent, allowed that in punishment of this dastardly sin, the slanderer should be possessed by the devil; and thus he was compelled to retract his calumny, and to lay bare the whole of his fraudulent scheme against the innocent Paphnutius. Thus did the saintly youth regain, by his heroic patience, the good name that had been so foully aspersed, and earn immense merit with God, Who must have been singularly pleased at such great patience.

366. But as the wounds inflicted on one's character are invariably deep, and frequently turn out almost incurable, I will add another instance of patience under outrage and disgrace, which must be called not only heroic but astounding. It is related by St. Peter Damian.* St. Romuald, when he had already passed his hundredth year, was accused by a faithless and wicked disciple, of a sin of so grievous a character that it may not even be named. Now, although under the circumstances the Saint could not possibly have committed the crime, still the slander gained credit, so that all the monks began to be indignant, and to rise up against him. Some exclaimed that the filthy old wretch ought to be hanged, others that his cell should be set on fire. All agreed

* In Vitâ S. Romuald., cap. 49.

that he deserved death. Meanwhile the holy Abbot bore all with patience, and with peace of soul put up with the disgrace and ignominy of so abominable a charge. But what placed the heroism of his forbearance in greater relief is, that, having been forewarned by a revelation from above of the storm about to burst upon him, he came purposely to the solitude where all this was to happen, in order to drink the bitter cup of shame which God had prepared for him.* Hence we may learn that no far-sightedness of prudence, no eminence in learning, no height of perfection or sublimity of holiness, is exempt from attacks and false charges, and from calumnies the most envenomed. Now, if men so highly endowed underwent such disgrace with the greatest equanimity, cannot you, who rank beneath them, put up patiently with the far slighter injuries done to your honour?

367. But if the trouble which has so disturbed you be aggravated by some personal insult or outrage, even in this case there are not wanting countless illustrious examples to encourage you to bear patiently with the like insults. In the Second Book of Kings you will find David assaulted with stones, which one of his meanest subjects cast at him in handfuls; and yet he not only kept his temper under so grievous an insult, but stayed the hand of Abisai, who would have avenged so gross an outrage in the blood of its perpetrator.† You will meet with a St. Bernard, who, being struck on the face by a priest whom, on good grounds, he had refused to admit into his monastery, far from evincing emotion at so unjust and shameful a blow, restrained the indignation of his monks, who were about to resent the insult put upon their saintly Abbot.‡ You will read, in the Dialogues of St. Gregory,§ that a monk called Libertinus, being immoderately beaten by his Abbot, and then struck on the head and face with a footstool, withdrew

* Sed credendum est procul dubio ad augendum viri sancti meritum hoc tam grandis adversitatis cœlitus accidisse flagellum. Nam et ipse asserebat, hoc in eremo, unde nuper abscesserat, agnovisse, et ad hoc dehonestatis impetum subeundum alacriter devenisse.

† Dimitte eum, ut male dicat: Dominus enim præcipit ei, ut malediceret David.

‡ Lib. iij., cap. 6.

§ Lib. i., cap. 2.

to his cell without uttering a word, or showing the least resentment or impatience; and so far was he from complaining of this cruel treatment, that when asked how his face came to be swollen and his eyes blackened, he concealed the real cause by saying that he had struck against a stool. Well might St. Gregory say that he admired far more the patience of this servant of God than the miracles it was hereafter given him to work.* You will see, in the life of St. Romuald, that, being struck with a stick on the left side of his head by Severus, his ghostly father, he never uttered a complaint or showed any concern. On one occasion only, when compelled by necessity, did he gently beg him to strike him on the right side, as the frequent blows he had received on the left ear had rendered him deaf on that side. St. Peter Damian concludes that the same Severus was seized with admiration at this great patience, and kept his severity within bounds.† And many others you will meet with who have borne bravely and calmly the outrage of a blow, and who may recall to you the argument that had such avail with St. Augustine: *Why canst thou not do what these men and women did with the help of God?*‡

368. Another trial from which few are exempt, and which puts our patience to the severest test, is that of illness, especially when long and severe, through acute pains in the head, in the teeth, in the nerves, or arising from the gravel, the stone, the colic, and such like. In order that patience may not succumb in such cases under the sufferings and incommodities of the illness, figure to yourself Job covered with sores from head to foot, scraping off with a potsherd the matter oozing from his ulcers, but yet as full of joy and happiness as if he were lying on a feather-bed instead of sitting on a dunghill. Or again, call to mind the picture St. Jerome has given us of St. Paula in her illness, who, though pierced by acute pains, was as cheerful in her looks and joyous in her words as though heaven were laid open before her,

* Ego virtutem patientiæ sancti patris, signis et miraculis majorem credo.

† Tunc illam tantam ejus patientiam admiratus, indiscretæ severitatis temperavit disciplinam. In Vitâ S. Romuald., cap. 4.

‡ Cur tu non poteris quod isti?

and she were gazing on the glory of that blessed country.* Think of St. Romula, as described by St. Gregory. Stricken with a cruel palsy, and deprived of the use of all her limbs, she lay motionless on her bed for many years together; yet not even once, though crushed under the burden of so grievous an infliction, did she betray a single mark of impatience, but rather showed herself as active in the practice of every virtue as she was helpless in her bodily limbs.†

369. Above all, figure to yourself St. Lidwina, covered from head to foot with most painful ulcers, with her flesh all rotting and falling off, she herself being left to lie, not on a soft bed, but on a rough board, and stretched there for eight and thirty whole years, ever equal to herself; without moanings, sighs, tears, or complaints; with heavenly calm on her brow, and a paradise of contentment in her heart.‡ Can there be found a more striking example of patience in infirmity? But, may I ask, were these and other servants of God insensible to the pricks of pain? Was their flesh of brass, or were their limbs of granite? Surely not, since they were fashioned of the same frail clay as ourselves, and were even of a less robust and more delicate constitution. If, then, they bore so cheerfully such painful diseases, can we not suffer, at least with patience, ailments much less grievous?

370. If the trial that robs you of your peace be the death of a beloved child, or of some other one near and dear to you, I need not take you to the school of the saints to learn the patience necessary under such losses, for profane history abounds with illustrious instances, which may not only instruct us, but may well put us to the blush. I will content myself with mentioning those which St. Jerome has recorded. The answer of Anaxagoras and of Telamon who each, being told of the death of their son, replied:

* Inter doloris aculeos quos mirâ patientiâ sustinebat, quasi apertos sibi cœlos aspiceret loquebatur: *Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbæ, et volabo, et requiescam.* In Epitaph. Paulæ, ad Eustoch.

† Nec tamen hæc eadem ejus mentem ad impatientiam flagella perduxerant: nam ipsa ei detrimenta membrorum facta fuerunt incrementa virtutum. Dial., lib. iv., cap. 15.

‡ In Vitâ S. Liduinæ. Apud Surium.

"I knew I had begotten a mortal man,"—is ever worthy of praise. Plato, Diogenes, Clitomachus, Carneades, Possidonius, set before us the example of others remarkable for their fortitude under such trials; but especially Pericles, and Xenophon the disciple of Socrates: the former of whom, soon after the loss of his two sons, harangued the people with a crown on his head; the latter, hearing the news of his son's death while offering a sacrifice, took off his crown, but on receiving the further intelligence that he had fallen in battle, put it on again as if he made no account of his death. Lucius Paulus, in the seven days' interval between the funerals of his two sons, entered Rome in triumph. I pass by Maximus, Cato, Gallus, Piso, Brutus, Scævola, Scaurus, Martius, Crassus, Marcellus, and Aufidius; whose fortitude under bereavement in nowise yields to that which they displayed in the field.*

371. Now, I must say, that if these men, who, being deprived of the light of faith, had no knowledge or hope of the blissful state which follows upon this present life — that never-ending, boundless, unspeakable happiness after which we yearn with all our desires—I must say, I repeat, that if they could behave with such calm at the death of a son or some one nearest of kindred, what ought to be our conduct at the death of kinsfolk, when we may hope that they have passed from a miserable to a blessed life, from a transient to an everlasting and immortal life? How, may I ask, should we not exert control over our feelings—we who hope to see them again one day in glory, and to live with them in never-failing happiness?

372. This very motive is urged by St. Gregory the Seventh, in

* Ubi Anaxagoræ, ac Telamonis semper laudata sententia: Sciebam me genuisse mortalem: (ita responderunt auditâ morte filii). Plato, Diogenes, Clitomachus, Carneades, Possidonius, proponunt innumerabiles viros, et maxime Periclem, et Xenophontem Socraticum: quorum alter, amissis duobus filiis, coronatus in concione disseruit; alter cum sacrificans filium audîsset occisum, deposuisse coronam dicitur, et eamdem capiti reposuisse, postquam in acie dimicantem reperit concidisse. . . . L. Paulus septem diebus, inter duorum exequias filiorum triumphans urbem ingressus est. Prætermitto Maximos, Catones, Gallos, Pisones, Brutos, Scævolas, Scauros, Martios, Crassos, Marcellos, atque Aufidios: quorum non minor in luctu, quam in bello virtus fuit, et quorum orbitates in consolationis libro Tullius explicavit, ne videar potius aliena, quam nostra quæsîsse. Epist. ad Heliod.

the rebuke which, in order to encourage him to patience, he addressed to Bishop Aragius, who was overwhelmed with grief at the loss of his relatives: "Cease, I beseech you," writes the holy Pontiff, "Cease to mourn and grieve; for it is unseemly to be overwhelmed with excessive sorrow at the loss of those who, it may be hoped, have by dying attained their true life. We who know, believe, and preach these things, ought not to grieve overmuch for those who depart hence; lest that which in others is set down to affection be rather imputed to us as a fault. It is a kind of despair to be overcome by grief, and is in contradiction to what we preach to others:—so much the more as the Apostle says, *I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope.*"* These reflections are very well suited to call up patience in the heart that is weighed down by sorrow for the death of friends.

373. Lastly, if the trial that afflicts you be of a spiritual nature, such as frequently befalls those who are earnest in prayer and striving to advance in Christian perfection, you will meet as many examples to encourage you to patience under this anguish of the soul, as the Catholic Church has enrolled saints in the catalogue of her heroes. Are you, peradventure, troubled with dryness in prayer? Are you callous and insensible to every supernatural truth? St. Teresa suffered more than you; for during eighteen years she lived plunged in a distressing desolation: yet she bore it with calm, and never gave up her accustomed devotions. Are you troubled by temptations of the flesh? Far worse than you was the Apostle of the Nations molested, for he had an angel of Satan ever at his side to buffet him, and to annoy him with these abominations; yet he never lost his peace of mind, after he had been taught by God that virtue can contract no stain from these

* Hortor, quiesce dolere, desine tristis esse. Nam indecens est de illis tædio afflictionis adduci, quos credendum est ad veram vitam moriendo pervenisse. Nos qui novimus, qui credimus, qui docemus, contristari nimium de obeuntibus non debemus, ne quod apud alios pietatis speciem tenet, hoc magis nobis culpa sit. Nam diffidentiæ quodammodo genus est contra hoc quod quisque prædicat, torqueri mœstitiâ, dicente Apostolo: Nolumus autem vos ignorare, fratres, de dormientibus, ut non contristemini sicut et cæteri, qui spem non habent. Epist. iij.

filthy suggestions, when they are suffered against their will; but, on the contrary, receives an increase of perfection and brightness. You may, perchance, be tortured by suggestions of diffidence, despair, blasphemy, impiety, and the like horrible enormities. But far beyond yours was the trial of that Seraph of Mount Carmel, St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, who, cast by the divine love into a den of infernal lions, to test her constancy, courageously underwent for several years the most frightful temptations. Wherefore should you not then bear with patience spiritual trials which persons far more advanced than yourself have borne with such resignation?

374. I know that you will reply, as an excuse for your want of patience, that these saints and others quoted in the present Chapter were sustained by an extraordinary grace of God, which strengthened them. What marvel, then, you will say, that they bore with such ease the heavy crosses laid upon them? This is not to be expected of us, who are frail, and undeserving of such mighty help at the hands of the divine bounty. Now, it is precisely this objection which is met by St. Augustine, and which served the most to confirm him in his resolve to be chaste: "How now! canst thou not do what others like unto thee have done? Thinkest thou they have been able to do it of their own strength, and not rather with the help of God? God is He who gave them their might and power. If thou thinkest to rest upon thyself, thou wilt surely not stand on thy feet. Cast thyself into the arms of God: He will surely not draw back that thou mayest fall. Cast thyself in all trust on His bosom: He will receive thee and heal thee from all thine infirmities."* Words which, adapted to our present purpose, mean that the saints have shown so heroic a patience under trial by the help of God,—which He is quite ready to afford us, if we pray without ceasing,—if, abandoning all self-trust, we cast ourselves in fullest confidence into His almighty arms.

* Tu non poteris quod isti, et istæ? An vero isti et istæ in se ipsis possunt, ac non in Domino Deo suo? Dominus eorum id dedit eis. Quid in te stas, et non stas? Projice te in eum: Noli metuere, non se subtrahet, ut cadas. Projice te securus, excipiet te, et sanabit te. Conf., lib. viij. cap. 11.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THREE DEGREES OF THE PERFECTION ATTAINABLE IN THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE.

375. THE first degree of patience is to check grief, so as not to allow it to become extreme; when adversity befalls us, not to burst forth into outward tokens of impatience; not to break out into lamentations, murmurings, complaints; also, as far as is possible, not to betray our trouble in the countenance, or in the motion of our limbs: and this for a two-fold reason. First, because the fact of not allowing our feelings to vent the bitterness in which they are steeped, reduces them insensibly to a state of calm; just as to stop the vent of a fire which was burning in an enclosed space soon extinguishes it. Secondly, because nothing is more edifying to our neighbours than to see us calm in the midst of tribulations. Cassiodorus* relates that Abbot Paul, dining once with a multitude of monks, wished to put to a singular test the patience of one of his novices, and to give a specimen of it to this holy assembly. For this purpose, he took occasion of his having forgotten to hand in at the proper time some dish or other, for which he gave him so sound a box on the ear that those who had not seen the motion of his hand were made sensible of it by the sound of the blow. The patient youth, on receiving so severe and shameful a stroke, uttered not a syllable, nor did he murmur within himself, neither was his countenance clouded; he did not out of sadness cast down his eyes, he did not even change colour. All present at the religious assembly were most edified at what they saw, indeed were wonderstruck, and spread the report throughout all the monasteries of Egypt. So great is the edification given to those who witness external composure under trials.

376. The second degree. After holding the outer senses in check, so as to prevent their giving any tokens of impatience, the spiritual man will proceed to regulate his interior, to banish all sadness, to dispel all sorrow, all pain, all sense of annoyance, and

* Collat. xix., cap. i.

to establish his heart in a placid and serene calm. For this purpose, as soon as any misfortune happens to him, he will at once betake himself to the considerations or examples given above; but especially to that one which has made the greatest impression upon him, and, keeping his mind fixed thereon, he will endeavour, by its means, to produce inward acts of patience, until he shall have calmed the storm which is beginning to rage within his breast. We must suppose that the Abbot Mutius behaved in this manner, when he was able to keep himself undisturbed amid the hard usage inflicted, not directly upon him, but upon his son—a treatment which was the more unbearable for a parent's heart. He had gone to a monastery with a little child of his, being anxious to secure eternal life for his boy, as well as for himself. The monks sure of the innocence of the child, but desirous of putting the father's patience to the test, began to ill-use the tender boy in countless ways. They sent him about dressed in rags rather than in clothes; they covered him from head to foot with dirt and filth, in order that he might present a pitiable spectacle to his father's eyes. They beat him so often, and so frequently cuffed him, that he was always in tears when his father saw him. Notwithstanding all this, says Cassian, the good man Mutius so knew how to regulate his interior by motives of the love of God as to remain imperturbable and, as it were, insensible to all natural feeling of resentment.*

377. We read in the life of St. Lidwina,† that a woman, compelled by a diabolical, rather than a human rage, entered the room of the saintly virgin, and began to abuse her with the most disgraceful reproaches and insults that could be expected from the lips of a woman beside herself, and maddened with rage. The Saint did not, however show the least emotion; but this conduct, far from pacifying her assailant, provoked her so much that she began to spit foul phlegm in her face. Still the patient maiden was not moved even by this disgusting outrage. On seeing this, the infuriated woman, as if she had been the person assailed instead

* Cumque taliter infans sub oculis ejus per dies singulos ageretur, pro amore nihilominus Christi, et obedientiæ virtute, rigida semper, et immobilia patris viscera permanserunt. De Inst. Renunt., lib. iv., cap. 27.

† Surius, Part. 2, cap. 1.

of the assailant, raised a loud outcry, and set the whole neighbourhood in motion. But even this was unable to disquiet or to trouble the tranquil soul of Lidwina, so that the beholders, witnessing her extraordinary patience, were overwhelmed with astonishment. Now, this imperturbability under trial is a very sublime degree of patience, and one which every spiritual person should strive to attain, with God's help and by means of repeated acts of the virtue.

378. The third degree. To undergo trial with joy and gladness. This is the most perfect degree of patience: not only to feel no grief in tribulation, but to pass through it with joy and content. And this is the degree which the Apostle of the Gentiles declares that he had attained when he writes: *I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.** *I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.*† The Royal Psalmist had descended to the same degree; as he himself bears witness, saying: *In the multitude of my sorrows within me, Thy comforts delight my soul.*‡ The Apostles, too, had also reached this eminence for, after undergoing affronts and outrages, they were glad and transported out of themselves for joy, even as if they had received praise, applause and honours.§

379. I am well aware that this degree of patience is difficult of attainment to our frail nature, which shrinks from nothing so much as from suffering. But, nevertheless, by manfully exercising ourselves in the two lower degrees of endurance, by repeatedly pondering the reasons developed above, which make trials as attractive in seeming as they are in reality, we may, with the help of divine grace, reach the third degree. What will also serve to render our trials sweet and agreeable is the reflection, that there can be no surer token that a soul is dear to God, and accounted among His favoured ones, than to be much chastened in this

* Superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione nostrâ. II. ad Cor. vij. 4.

† Placeo mihi in infirmitatibus meis, et in contumeliis, in necessitatibus, in angustiis pro Christo. II. ad Cor. xij. 10.

‡ Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum in corde meo consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam. Ps. xciij. 19.

§ Illi quidem ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii, quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati. Act. v. 41.

mortal life; for, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: *Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives.** And so true is this, that St. Augustine does not hesitate to assert that one who is wholly free from trial deserves not the name of Christian; for the Apostle expressly say that *all who wish to live piously in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.*†

380. We may be encouraged to this love of suffering by the example of that saintly disciple of St. Dominic, whose name was "Bona," which is interpreted "good."‡ This woman, who was no less good by nature than by name, had so frightful a cancer in her breast, that it seemed to be nothing but one large swarm of maggots, while to her it was dearer than any ornament richly embroidered with the most costly gems. The holy patriarch, after having one morning heard her Confession and given to her Holy Communion, asked her to show him the great ulcer she had in her breast. She complied, and St. Dominic, at the sight of the number, size, and loathsomeness of the worms that battened on her, shrank back with horror; yet, being none the less edified by her heroic patience, he begged her to give him one of the vermin that were crawling over her bosom. She showed some unwillingness to grant his request, as if the maggot had been the most valuable thing in her possession; but at length yielded, on the express engagement of St. Dominic that it should be restored to her. St. Dominic laid hold of it, and as he was curiously examining it, and turning it about with his finger, it all at once changed into a bright diamond. The monks, who were standing by, amazed at beholding this, besought their Prior to keep it as a memorial of the prodigy. But Bona began to sob bitterly, and to entreat so earnestly for the restoration of her treasure, that the Saint had not the heart to retain it. The woman then took it with joy, and placed it anew on her ulcer, where it returned forthwith to its

* Quem diligit Deus castigat, flagellat autem omnem filium, quem recipit. Ad Hebr. xij. 6.

† Si putas, te non habere tribulationes, nondum cœpisti esse Christianus. Et ubi est vox apostoli: *Omnes qui volunt in Christo pie vivere persecutionem patientur.* In Ps. lv.

‡ S. Ant., 3 part. Chron., tit. 23, chap. 4, § 10.

former shape, and began to feed on her as before. Behold how saintly souls knowing, as they do, the priceless treasure concealed in sufferings, not only welcome trials with a tranquil mind, but deem sorrow to be gladness; look upon sickness as a bounteous gift; hold sores to be jewels, and the very maggots to be precious gems.

381. To complete the present subject, we may observe that the patience, of which we have hitherto been speaking, is (as we have said) at once a potential virtue and an integral part of the virtue of fortitude, since it is necessary to render the latter virtue complete and entire as to its essential requisites. But there are other virtues besides, which have also to contribute to its perfect completeness, and hence may claim to be styled integral parts of fortitude. Such, according to St. Thomas, are Confidence, Largeness of Soul, and Perseverance. By the first we do not mean the Theological Virtue whereby we wholly rest on the almighty power and truth of God,* but the hope and reliance that a man may have in himself, though this must be subordinate to God, and acknowledged as a gift from Him. So far the same Angelic Doctor teaches.† This self-reliance renders us ready to go forth to meet coming evil, and to drive it back. Largeness of soul hinders us from losing heart in the performance of the task above described; this being a virtue which inclines to undertake and carry through arduous and lofty enterprises with constancy. Inasmuch as the second part—namely, the endurance of arduous trials—is concerned, patience and perseverance are an integral portion of fortitude; since patience moderates our grief when great misfortunes befall us, and renders them bearable; perseverance then supports us, so that we may not weary nor lose heart under the lengthened endurance of such evils. All this the Apostle St. Paul teaches.‡ For if, according to the remark of St. Thomas, perseverance is nothing else but a constant and perpetual

* 2, 2, qu. 128, art. 1 in corp.

† Spes, quâ quis de Deo confidit, ponitur virtus theologica, ut supra habitum est; sed per fiduciam, quæ nunc punitur fortitudinis pars, homo habet spem in se ipso, tamen sub Deo. Ibid., art. 1. ad 2.

‡ Non defatigemini, animis vestris deficientes. Ad Heb. xij. 3.

persistence in the same tone of mind,* it follows that the perseverance of which we are now treating is nothing else than a constant, unwearying endurance in bearing with evil. We may infer from all this, that if our fortitude be well buttressed by the support of these four integral parts, we shall be enabled to pass, not only blamelessly, but even with heroism, through all the most grievous trials which beset us on all sides in this vale of tears.

CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE PRESENT TREATISE.

382. FIRST suggestion. If the Director be wishful that souls exercised by various trials should endure their sufferings with fitting patience, he must exhort them to betake themselves to prayer, and to beg unceasingly of God the gift of endurance, until calm be restored to their souls. We have already seen that the effect of misfortune is a certain sorrow and a certain bitterness, which, when trouble first comes upon us, seize upon our heart; for which spiritual ailment the Apostle St. James prescribes a remedy in the words: *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.*† God will cause all sadness to vanish from our breast, will temper our grief and assuage our sufferings. The unfailing certainty of this remedy is grounded on the promise of God, recorded in the Divine Scriptures, that He will afford help to the afflicted, provided only they have recourse to Him in the time of trial. *Call upon Me in the day of trouble, saith the Lord, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.*‡ *He shall call upon Me, and I will hearken to him; I am*

* Perseverantia est in ratione bene consideratâ, stabilis et perpetua permansio.

† Tristatur aliquis vestrum? oret.

‡ Invoca me in die tribulationis: eruam te, et honorificabis me. Ps. xlix. 15.

*with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and glorify him.** *Then cried they to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of all their distresses.*† For which reason God cannot do less than bend His ear to the afflicted when they ask Him for patience. It may indeed come to pass that He will not grant them deliverance from the evils under which they groan, as such an answer to their prayer would not be invariably expedient to His glory, or to their welfare. But that He grant them not patience, when they ask for it properly, is a sheer impossibility—this being a gift which beyond all doubt is conformable to His divine will, and to which He is straitly pledged by His own gracious promise. By this means Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, obtained from God patience amid her grievous sorrows. She was barren, and this affliction was aggravated by the taunts of her rival Phenennah who, instead of compassionating her trial, was constantly reproaching her with bitter words; so the unhappy woman, overcome by sadness, neither ate nor drank, and her countenance was full of gloom and sadness. In this bitterness of soul, she betook herself to prayer and heartily recommended her case to God; for which purpose she resorted to the holy temple. When her prayer was ended, sorrow had vanished from her heart; her brow was no longer overcast and, as the inspired text says: *Her countenance was no more sad.*‡ What is more, she obtained the offspring she had so ardently desired, and became the mother of Samuel. To this means also the chaste Susanna had recourse, when she found herself on the point of losing both her honour and her life, through the slanderous charges which the two lecherous elders had trumped up against her. *Weeping, she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord.*§ She then made the following prayer: *Thou knowest, O God, that they have borne false*

* Clamabit ad me, et ego exaudiam eum: cum ipso sum in tribulatione; eripiam eum, et glorificabo eum. Ps. xc. 15.

† Clamaverunt ad Dominum cum tribularentur, et de necessitatibus eorum liberavit eos. Ps. cvj. 13.

‡ Et abiit mulier in viam suam, et comedit, vultusque illius non sunt amplius in diversa mutati. 1 Reg. j. 18.

§ Quæ flens, suspexit in cœlum: erat enim cor ejus fiduciam habens in Deo.

*witness against me, and behold, I must die; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me.** *And the Lord heard her voice,*† and put both her reputation and her life beyond danger. This too was the means of which King Josaphat made use, in the difficulties under which he was once placed. Surrounded by a mighty host, and in great danger of falling into his enemies' hands, he lifted up his eyes to God and besought Him for aid.‡ Such is the balm wherewith the Director must assuage the sorrows of his afflicted penitents; he must engage them to recommend themselves frequently and trustfully, and with all their heart, to God; from Whom they will, in the first place, ask for patience, and, in the second place, deliverance from the evils under which they suffer. If they fail to obtain this deliverance, on account of its being inexpedient for them, they will surely obtain the virtue of patience, which is the most important point. But bear in mind that to prayer must be added our own co-operation, by applying ourselves to the consideration of such motives as are best suited to chase away gloom and to tranquillise the heart; as also by making effort, with the help of these, to bear our cross in calm and peace of mind.

383. Second suggestion. It will avail much for the attainment of this patience, to forecast the evils which are likely to befall us, and to prepare ourselves generously for bearing them with fortitude; otherwise, coming on us unawares, even though they be slight, they overwhelm us with grief and cast us down with sorrow, without our being able to help ourselves. This is the means employed by our Lord with His Apostles, in order to arm them with patience against the fearful trials which awaited them; He foretold to them His sorrowful departure; and how the world should rejoice, while their lot was to be weeping, sorrow, trouble, and mourning. And at the end of His discourse, He said: *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the*

* Tu scis quoniam falsum testimonium tulerunt contra me, et ecce morior, cum nihil horum fecerim, quæ isti malitiose composuerunt adversum me.

† Exaudivit autem Dominus vocem ejus. Dan. xiij.

‡ Cum ignoremus quid agere debeamus, hoc solum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te. II. Paral. xx. 12.

*world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.** Whence, St. Gregory says, that to forecast our trials is a solid buckler, against which all the shafts of human vicissitudes are blunted, so that they are hindered from wounding our hearts with grief, and from destroying them with the sadness so natural to man.† Nay more; even Seneca, a heathen, attained to the knowledge of this truth, and taught it when he said: "that for unrefined persons evils became light through the habit of endurance, but to a wise man they are lightened by reflection."‡ The Director should then instruct a penitent who is desirous of acquiring the virtue of patience, to foresee in his meditations all the hard, harsh and untoward things that may possibly befall him; to muster them before the eyes of his mind; and then, in the light of the motives we have set forth above, to gain courage to go to face them; and bravely to undergo them in spite of the flinching of nature. By a frequent repetition of this useful exercise, he will come to receive with calm the crosses which God may send him; and will avoid being crushed and borne down by their grievous weight.

384. Third suggestion. The Director is, however, to bear in mind, that though a prudent forecasting of the trials which may possibly come to our share helps very much to the acquirement of patience, yet to brood over them, after they have happened, may become very prejudicial. To think of evils, the grievousness of which we do not feel as yet, may be of great assistance in encouraging us to endurance; to ponder on them while we are groaning under the burden, can only render them more grievous, and even unbearable, and put our patience to too strong a test. For, in truth, the greatest evil, of all evils, is the form which these take in the fancies of our mind. A man has been affronted; if he begin to brood over the circumstances which aggravate the

* Hæc locutus sum vobis, ut in me pacem habeatis. In mundo pressuram habebitis; sed confidite, ego vici mundum. Joan. xvj. 33.

† Jacula prævisa minus feriunt: et nos tolerabilius mundi mala suscipimus, si contra hæc per præscientiæ clypeum munimur. Hom. 35 In Evang.

‡ Quæ alii diu patiendo levia faciunt, vir sapiens levia facit diu cogitando. Epist. 77.

insult—the abject condition of his assailant, his own rank and position, the dishonour, the shame, and other evil results it may occasion—it is certain that he will intensify his sorrow, and be plunged into deeper melancholy; from sadness he will pass to anger, resentment and revenge. The same holds good of every other kind of tribulation. On the contrary, if he turn his mind from the subject, all bitterness will soon evaporate. Hence, it is sound advice, for times of tribulation, to turn away the mind from it by a certain loftiness of soul, and to think of it only so far as is necessary for making an offering of it to God. By this means we shall succeed in bearing adversity with a calm and untroubled heart.

385. Fourth suggestion. The Director should allow his penitents a more frequent recourse to the Sacraments in the time of great trial; for nothing will so effectually enable them to endure trouble; since, as holy David says, "Thou, O my God, hast prepared this Eucharistic table to strengthen me against those who cause me tribulation."* We find in the Old Testament two figures expressing this truth—one in Elias, the other in Daniel. Elias was fleeing from the wicked Jezabel who sought his life, and, after a long journey, exhausted by weariness and fear, he lay down under the shadow of a juniper-tree, wishing that death would come to put an end to such dire misery; when an Angel of the Lord, compassionating his great affliction, came to give comfort to his soul and refreshment to his body, with a cake baked on the coals, giving it to the Prophet to eat.† The mystic food imparted such vigour to the wearied frame of Elias and such courage to his dejected spirits, that he was able, in the strength of that food, to journey forty days and forty nights to the summit of Mount Horeb. Here is a figure of the strength which we derive from the Eucharistic Bread amid the troubles and persecutions of this life. The same applies to that mess of bread broken up in a bowl which Habacuc, being carried by the Angel to Babylon, brought to Daniel in the lions' den, where he was surrounded by

* Parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me. Ps. xxij. 5.

† Petivit animæ suæ, ut moreretur. III. Reg. xix. 4.

those fierce monsters.* Here we have another figure of the sacramental food, which strengthens, comforts, and gives vigour to our patience, amid the ills that compass us round about. And, in fact, it was by the use of this Bread of Heaven that the early Christians were strengthened for martyrdom, the greatest trial and the most hazardous conflict to which the fidelity of a Christian can be exposed. If, then, the Director would increase patience in persons who are tried by many and grievous tribulations, he must allow them a more frequent use of the Sacraments, which if employed devoutly, cannot fail to produce within them the looked-for result.

386. Fifth suggestion. But, above all, the Director must treat afflicted persons with the greatest gentleness and discretion. He must bear with their whims, compassionate their sorrow; weep, if he can, with those that weep; and, in a word, practise with them the like patience with which he seeks to inspire them by his advice, taking the same pity on their troubles as he would wish to be shown to himself, were he tried in like manner. Such compassion, gentleness, and tender-heartedness will prove a balm for their wounds, and an assuaging remedy for their sorrow.

ARTICLE IX.

The Virtue of Chastity.

CHAPTER I.

THE ESSENCE OF THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY.—THREE CLASSES OF THIS VIRTUE, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE EXCELLENCIES.

387. As we said in the fourth Article, Chastity is a species of the cardinal virtue of Temperance, and, according to St. Thomas, it is derived from *castigare*, to chasten, to chastise; for even as an

* Daniel. xiv. 32.

unruly child needs to be chastised, lest he be drawn to ruin by foolish whims, so too does our lust, like a shameless child, stand in need of the correction of reason, by means of some distinct moral virtue, lest it approach its lips to the forbidden cup of filthy delights. Now, chastity is this virtue; it holds in check our sensual appetite, and restrains it from tasting that sweet draught which is its poison.* Hence, the holy Doctor rightly infers the necessity of this virtue for every one: for, as a child with vicious propensities becomes daily more undisciplined when left to his own guidance, so, if we begin to indulge our appetite for pleasure, its frenzy will get enkindled, and it will become more and more petulant in the gratification of its cravings.†

388. Nor is this virtue opposed merely to acts of the opposite vice, but further, to every amorous thought, to every desire of such actions, or to secret pleasure in the recollection of them; these being a disorder of our unruly lust, which right reason must hold in check. Hence, in treating of virginity, the Angelic Doctor lays down that it formally consists in the inward act of the will, in the firm, determined, and enduring resolve not to suffer anything that is incompatible with virginal integrity; while the integrity of the body appertains only to the material part of this sublime virtue. For unquestionably that woman would not cease in God's sight to be a virgin who, being violated by an overbearing force, were to disavow with the will the brutal attack, and persevere in the resolution never to consent to that which, despite herself, she has been constrained to suffer. So true is it that this virtue derives its brightest lustre from inward acts—that is, from a strict watch kept over the mind and heart—and that an unholy thought or unclean

* Dicendum, quod nomen castitatis sumitur ex hoc, quod per rationem concupiscentia castigatur, quæ ad modum pueri est refrænanda. 2, 2, Quæst. 151, art. 1.

† Concupiscentia delectabilis maxime assimilatur puero, eo quòd appetitus delectabilis est nobis connaturalis, et præcipue delectabilium secundum tactum, quæ ordinantur ad conservationem naturæ; et inde est, quod si nutriatur horum delectabilium concupiscentia per hoc, quod ei consentiatur, maxime augebitur, sicut puer, qui suæ voluntati relinquitur. Et sic concupiscentia horum delectabilium maxime indiget castigari: et ideo circa horum concupiscentiam antonomastice dicitur castitas. Ead. Quæst., art. 2.

emotion, provided it be wilful, is enough to sully its brightness.*

389. We may cite, in confirmation of what we now say, the case of St. Francis Xavier. While waiting, at Lisbon, for the ship that was to take him to the East Indies, he awoke suddenly, and found that he had vomited a great quantity of blood.† Father Simon Rodriguez, who was sleeping in the same room, inquired the cause of this copious loss of blood. The Saint parried his questions, and refused to satisfy him just then. When at length the day for departure had come and the fleet was about to set sail for the Indies, he drew him apart and said to him in confidence, "Friend, on this earth we shall see each other no more, as I am now going to a new world; but, before taking leave, I will answer the questions you have so repeatedly put to me about that blood which one night I threw up in such abundance. Know, then, that the cause of the attack was none other than an impure illusion that presented itself to my fancy while asleep. I combated it with such an effort that I burst a blood-vessel either in the head or chest, and thus it happened that I was forced to part with a torrent of blood."—But wherefore, may I ask, make against some mere fancy a stand so violent, that no greater would be possible against the most hideous temptation? The reason is that Xavier knew right well that an unclean thought, to say nothing of an unchaste deed, sufficed to stain the white lily of his chastity. Whence we may conclude, that chastity is a moral virtue which has for its function to hold in check the desire of any unchaste pleasure, be it inward or be it outward.

390. The saints distinguish various species of chastity. One is called virginal, another conjugal, and the third the chastity of widows. The first belongs to those who have ever kept unblemished the innocence they brought with them from their mother's womb. The second, or conjugal chastity, is the virtue

* Dicendum, quod sicut supra dictum est, in virginitate est, sicut formale et completivum, propositum abstinendi a delectatione venereâ: quod quidem propositum laudabile redditur ex fine, in quantum scilicet hoc fit ad vacandum rebus divinis. Materiale autem in virginitate est integritas carnis, absque omni experimento venereæ delectationis. 2, 2, q. 152, a. 3.

† Horat. Tursel, lib. vi. de Vitâ S. Francisci, cap. 6.

of those who, engaged in the marriage-state, withhold themselves from all pleasure which their condition does not sanction. The third is proper to such as have been married but who, having lost their companion, care not to seek another, and live blameless and undefiled in their new state. To this class may be joined such as not being virgins, nor married, nor widows, keep continency by solemn promise, or at least by fixed purpose of never marrying.

391. These several classes have each a lustre proper to itself, whereby they deck the garden of Holy Church, according to the remark of St. Ambrose. "Here you may behold the white lilies of virginity, which adorn it by their brightness. There, the plants of honourable widowhood, which, though barren, are yet comely to the eye, and embellish it with their beauty. In another part you may see the fertile harvests which fill with precious grain the storehouses of Holy Church; the vineyard where the vines, married to the elms, produce abundant fruit for the Saviour of mankind. Thus do all contribute by the purity which is proper to them, to embellish and enrich this garden of delights."*

392. But St. Jerome goes into further detail, and assigns to each class the excellences which it may justly claim. Commenting on the Gospel parable of the sower, he gives to virginal chastity and to that of widows, the preference over conjugal chastity, and extols above the others virginal chastity as the purest and most unblemished. Christ tells us that the husbandman sowed his seed in the field, but some fell on the highway, and some went to waste among the rocks and thorns: thus what was not trodden under foot by passers-by, was picked up by birds, parched with drought, or choked by brambles and briers. But some fell on good ground, where it yielded in one place a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty-fold. "This good ground,"

* Est ecclesiæ campus diversis fecundus copiis. Hic cernas germina virginitatis flore vernantia; illic tamquam in campis sylvæ viduitatem gravitate pollentem; alibi tamquam uberi fruge conjugii ecclesiæ segetem replentem mundi horrea; ac veluti maritatæ vineæ fetibus torcularia Jesu Christi redundantia, in quibus fidelis conjugalis fructus exuberat. De Virg., lib. iij.

writes the holy Doctor, "is the hearts of virtuous persons, who yield the fruits of chastity, yet with a certain variety; the thirty-fold is the produce of the hearts of those chaste in marriage; the sixtyfold yield is that of continent and blameless widowhood; but the hundredfold springs from the hearts of virgins, as being of all the purest and least defiled."*

393. St. Cyprian coincides in the same view. He will have it that to each degree of chastity should be given its own glory, so that the first degree is assigned to virginity, as being by far the most excellent, the second degree assigned to the continent, and the third to those in the married state who keep their plighted troth to their partners.† Lastly, it is remarked by St. Ambrose, that virginal integrity is so to be praised as not to detract from the chastity of widowhood; which in its turn must be honoured, yet not so as to deprive chaste marriage of its due; for each of these states or degrees of chastity, has its own degree, although they are not all equal.‡ Every person must therefore guard with a jealous care, as a priceless pearl, the degree of chastity which he possesses, lest by his heedlessness it be lost amid the filth of sensual delights.

394. To stimulate my readers to this jealous watchfulness, I will bring forward, not an old man bent by age, not any man of adult years, but a child not more than thirteen years of age, no less charming in his outward appearance than by his virginal purity. He was named Pelagius,§ and having been brought before the tyrant to answer for his faith, he plainly protested that he was a follower of the world's Redeemer. The barbarian, no less anxious to steal from his heart the priceless gem of faith

* Centesimum fructum virginibus, sexagesimum viduis, trigesimum casto matrimonio deputamus. In cap. xiii. Matth.

† Pudicitia primum locum in virginibus tenet, secundum in continentibus, tertium in matrimoniis. Verum omnibus gloriosa est cum gradibus suis. Nam et matrimoniorum fidem tenere laus est inter tot corporis bella, et matrimonio de continentiâ modum statuisse, majoris virtutis est, dum etiam licita rejiciuntur. De Bono Pudicitiæ.

‡ Ita igitur virginitatem prædicamus, ut viduas non rejiciamus; ita viduas honoramus, ut suus honos conjugio conservetur. De Viduis.

§ Raguel, Scriptor vitae S. Pelagii.—Baronius, Annal. A.D. 925, n. 13.

than the treasure of chastity, directed against this last-named virtue a formidable assault. The guileless boy turned to him with a boldness beyond his years, saying: "Out of my sight, thou loathsome hound! Thinkest thou that I am effeminate and unchaste, like thy courtiers and vassals?"* Then, quickly casting off with a holy indignation his outer garments, this dauntless athlete prepared to combat for the defence of his treasure, resolved to part with life rather than sully his purity. The barbarian, seeing himself overcome by a mere child, handed him over to his servants, commanding them to try his constancy by all their allurements of delight. But finding after some time that all their artifices had no more effect upon him than the winds and storms have upon a rock, he gave orders that he should be cruelly tortured with iron pincers, and then cut into pieces, slice by slice, with sharp knives. Such was the end of this noble-hearted child, a victim so much the more acceptable to God as his chastity was the more unblemished. He must have known right well what a priceless gem is chastity, since he would allow no promises, no threats, no terror, no fear to rob him of it; courageously enduring, in its defence, grievous pains, racking tortures, and death itself in its most frightful form.

CHAPTER II.

CHASTITY, MORE THAN OTHER MORAL VIRTUES, RENDERS US HOLY, AND LIKENS US TO THE ANGELS.

395. THE Apostle says to the Thessalonians: *This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*† And that there might be no question in what the sanctification consists after which it is God's will that we should most earnestly strive, he sets it forth in the most unmistakable terms, at once explaining his meaning:

* Tollere, canis. Numquid me similem tuis effeminatum existimas?
† Hæc est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra. I. Ad Thess. iv. 3.

*That ye abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence.** But what does this mean? Are not our souls sanctified by patience, religion, justice, humility, and the other moral virtues? They are, replies Cassian, but the Apostle would show that chastity has a special prerogative; he would give us to understand that it belongs in a particular manner to chastity to maintain our body in honour and our soul in holiness,† and a little after he again gives to this virtue the noble title of sanctification.‡ In the Epistle to the Hebrews, he repeats the same warning: *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God.*§ And then, explaining the nature of that holiness which purifies the eye of the mind, and enables it to behold the divine beauty, he tells us that it consists in an entire freedom from fornication, and all profane uncleanness.‖ Elsewhere, the same holy Apostle, exhorting the widows to remain unwedded and the young to preserve intact the fair lily of their virginity, alleges as a motive what we have been saying, and assures them that by keeping chaste they will attain holiness both in body and soul.¶ Nor are we to wonder

* Ut abstineatis vos a fornicatione; ut sciat unusquisque vestrum vas suum possidere in sanctificatione, et honore, non in passione desiderii. I. Ad Thess. iv. 4.

† *Hæc est*, inquit Apostolus, *voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.* Et ne forte dubium nobis relinqueret, vel obscurum quidnam sanctificationem voluerit appellare, utrum justitiam, an caritatem, an humilitatem, an patientiam (in omnibus enim istis virtutibus creditur acquiri sanctificatio), infert et manifeste designat quid proprie sanctificationem voluerit appellare. *Hæc est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra, ut abstineatis vos*, inquit, *a fornicatione ut sciat unusquisque vestrum vas suum possidere in sanctificatione, et honore, non in passione desiderii, sicut et gentes quæ ignorant Deum.* Vides quibus eam laudibus prosequatur: honorem vasis, id est corporis nostri, et sanctificationem, appellans eam. De Fornic., lib. vi., cap. 15.

‡ Non enim Deus vocavit nos in immunditiam, sed in sanctificationem. Eod. cap. num. 7.

§ Pacem sectamini cum omnibus, et sanctimoniam, sine quâ nemo videbit Deum. Hebr. xii. 14.

‖ Ne quis fornicator, et profanus, ut Esau. Heb. xii. 14, 16.

¶ Mulier innupta, et virgo cogitat quæ Domini sunt, ut sit sancta corpore, et spiritu. I. ad Corint., vii. 34.

at this, for chastity is a virtue which preserves man from all uncleanness, and therefore purifies his soul, illumining, embellishing and making it holy.

396. And here I cannot help observing, with St. John Chrysostom, that St. Paul never speaks with such vehemence and energy as when treating of this beautiful virtue. He makes mention of it in every one of his epistles, be they addressed to private individuals—as those to Timothy—or to whole Churches, as those to the Romans, Hebrews, Thessalonians, or Corinthians.* The holy Doctor alleges, as the reason for the frequency and earnestness of the repeated allusions to this noble virtue by the Apostle of the Gentiles, the wide-spread ruin of souls that is wrought by the contrary vice, both because it keeps them immersed, like unclean animals, in the filth of countless abominations, and because it is an evil so difficult to cure.† Whence it may be inferred, that if impurity is universally the ruin of those who are caught in its meshes, St. Paul might well say that the opposite virtue, chastity, is the true sanctification of our souls.

397. But if chastity be so precious a treasure of sanctity, what wonder that, rather than lose it, St. Benedict rolled naked among brambles, and crimsoned the thorns with his blood? that Abbot Macarius walked barefoot amid briers, piercing with their sharp points the soles of his feet? that St. Francis of Assisi rolled in the snow on one of the coldest nights of winter? that St. Bernard plunged naked into a frozen pond, and remained there benumbed and half-dead with cold? that a solitary of Egypt burnt all the fingers of both hands in the flame of a lamp, enduring a

* Et sane, quomodo nusquam de aliâ quâpiam re adeo vehementer, obscure, et latenter loquitur, atque de istâ. Quemadmodum et alibi scribens, dicit: *Pacem sectamini cum omnibus, et sanctificationem, sine quâ nemo Dominum videbit.* Et quid miraris, quod ubique discipulis de hâc re scribit? quando et Timotheo scribens, dixerit: *Te ipsum castum custodi;* et in secundâ ad Corinthios epistolâ: *In multâ tolerantiâ, in jejuniis, in castitate, et puritate;* et in multis locis hoc invenire licet, et in eâ quæ ad Romanos est, et passim in omnibus ubique epistolis.

† Reverâ namque, quosvis hoc malum corrumpit ac perdit. Et quemadmodum porcus in cæno volutatus, quocumque ingressus fuerit, omnia fœtore replet, ac sensus graveolenti fœtore imbuit; ita et scortatio malum est, quod difficile abluitur. Homil. 5 in 1 Thessal.

terrible and prolonged torture? that the undaunted Martinianus stood barefooted in the midst of burning embers, and bravely endured that agony? What wonder, I ask, that these and so many other dauntless heroes so cruelly tormented their flesh for the preservation of this treasure which enriches with holiness those who possess it, when we behold worldlings daily brave disaster, and death itself, in order to acquire frail and perishable riches?

398. But I must own that I am most impressed by the heroic resolve of a young girl of twelve years of age in defence of her virginal purity.* She was a native of Alexandria, and was pursued by the amorous looks, smiles, and enticements of a dissolute youth. The more the innocent maiden avoided him, the more did he seek her company; the more she repelled him, the more did he pay court to her. Being anxious, however, not to be robbed of the priceless gem of her virginity, she took the most extraordinary step that can be imagined. She went and hid herself in an old tomb, and there concealed for twelve years those charms that had kindled the love of the shameless youth—receiving through a small hole, from the hands of some of her friends, the food necessary to support life. Being questioned by some one in her confidence why she thus buried herself alive, she made answer: "In order to put the priceless treasure of my purity out of danger." Just as a miser who, seeing some one going round his house on the watch for his store, places it in safety by hiding it in the earth, this heroic girl went and buried herself alive to secure the peerless treasure of her virginity against the designs of that deceitful youth.

399. But Palladius, reported by Baronius, makes mention of a yet more wondrous act of heroism, which was performed in the same city of Alexandria, by a most pure-hearted maiden called Potamenia, to the amazement of the whole city.† This girl, gifted outwardly with the most ravishing charms, and in her soul with an angelic purity, was bought by an idolater who, like a cruel bird of prey, began to lay snares for the virginal innocence

* Egnat., lib. v. cap. 7. Fulg., lib. iv. cap. 5.

† Pallad. in Laus. Hist., cap. 1. Apud Baron., tom. iii., A.D. 310.

of this guileless dove. But as he soon discovered that all his malicious artifices availed not to lure her into his clutches, he took the most barbarous resolution that his blind passion could have inspired. He accused her to the idolatrous Prefect as a Christian and as contumacious to the Emperor and a despiser of the gods—promising him, at the same time, a large sum of money if he could persuade the virtuous girl to yield to his guilty desires; but if she stood firm, he was to put her to death amid countless tortures, so that his shameful attempt might be buried with her in everlasting oblivion. The maiden was then brought before the unrighteous judge, was tried with fair promises, tried with threats, and tried with torments; but all failed to conquer the virginal heart of this brave girl. Then the judge had a great fire lighted under a caldron full of pitch, and while it was boiling he said to her, "Prepare either to obey the commands of your master, or to be thrown into this boiling caldron." The dauntless maid replied: "Far be it from me to obey the orders of a judge who, instead of punishing crime, commands it." The judge, foaming with rage at seeing himself thus set at naught by a girl, ordered her forthwith to be stripped and cast into the boiling caldron. Nothing scared at this order, the saintly girl said to him: "I will go into it, but I crave one favour, for the love you bear your Emperor and the loyalty you profess to him; do not plunge me in all at once, but slowly and by degrees, that I may savour the sweetness of the torments that I undergo for the sake of my honour, and that you may behold how great is the patience my dear Lord bestows upon such as keep themselves pure and undefiled."* At these words she was let down into the caldron; but the boiling pitch lost all its heat at the contact of her virginal flesh, nor had it power to hurt those limbs that had never been defiled with the flames of impurity. Thus did Potamenia escape safe and sound out of the burning, to be a living trophy of the defeat which her undaunted constancy

* Per caput, inquit, imperatoris tui, quod tu vereris, obtestor, ut si apud te statutum est, his me tormentis necare, non simul totam, sed paullatim me in fervente mitti jubeas picem, ut possis videre, quantam mihi dedit ignotus tibi patientiam Christus.

had inflicted on lechery. Let us learn from this spotless and courageous virgin the esteem we should have of the treasure of holiness, which, as the Apostle teaches, is contained in chastity; and let us learn to be ready to undergo all things rather than to suffer its loss, since she, in order to preserve it, was ready to lay down her life with such courage. St. Bernard was thrice tempted in an inn by a shameless woman, and shouting at the top of his voice, "Thieves! thieves!" so frightened her that she fled. The Saint could not have chosen a fitter expression; for, as there is nothing which so hallows a soul and makes it valued in the sight of God as chastity, so no theft can be more heinous than to rob any one of it.

400. But we must proceed to set forth the other excellences of this virtue, which has the property of rendering us equal not only to the saints but to the very angels themselves; as St. Bernard remarks, and as we ourselves have elsewhere observed. "What," asks the mellifluous Doctor, "can be more beautiful than chastity, which renders clean one who is of his nature unclean, and transforms him, mere man as he is, into an angel?* There is, indeed, a difference," he continues, "between chaste men and the holy angels, but it is this: in the latter chastity is the happy endowment of their nature; while in man it results from the energy of virtue."†

401. St. John Chrysostom examines more closely the reasons why chastity is to be held in higher esteem in man than in the angels. "The angels," he says, "are not made up, as we are, of flesh and blood; they are incapable of marriage; they are not living, as we are, on this filthy earth, nor are they liable to the upheavings of passion; they have no need of food or drink, which so often add fuel to the flames of lust; their nature is not affected by a sweet sound, a dulcet song, or a beauteous form: they are impervious to all these allurements.

* Quid castitate decorius, quæ *mundum de immundo conceptum semine*, de hoste domesticum, angelum denique de homine facit?

† Differunt quidem inter se homo pudicus, et angelus; sed felicitate, non virtute: sed etsi illius castitas felicior, hujus tamen fortior esse cognoscitur. Epist. 42.

What wonder, then, that they should be chaste? But that man, so far inferior by nature to these blessed spirits, with so many drawbacks, should yet strive to be like unto them in purity, this is indeed a height of virtue worthy of all admiration. And, in plain truth, wherein did an Elias, an Eliseus, a John Baptist, those faithful lovers of the virtue of chastity, differ from the angels? In nothing but that they were mortal by nature, while the angels are without a body, and immortal: in all besides they equalled the angelic host. But the very fact that, being beneath the blessed spirits by their condition they equalled them in purity, must ever redound to their praise and glory."*

402. The reader may now understand why certain great servants of God feared not to disfigure their countenances in order to keep unsullied the brightness of their virginal purity. They knew full well that bodily charms war against the angelic beauty with which chastity endows the soul; whence they shrank not from making themselves like monsters in outward appearance, provided they could but keep like to the angels in their soul. Such was a St. Andreysia, a maid of noble race, of the Frank nation, whose countenance was ravishing, and conversation angelic.† Her parents having resolved on bestowing her in marriage on a knight of the same rank, named Ausbert, she betook herself to earnest prayer to God that He would render her repulsive in her countenance, that, being abhorred by men, she might the more easily preserve all the fair lilies of her virginity. The Lord hearkened to a

* Neque nubunt angeli, neque uxorem ducunt, non etiam carne et sanguine coagmentati sunt; in terris præterea non habitant; non cupiditatum, et libidinum perturbationibus sunt obnoxii: non cibi indigent, aut potûs; non sunt hujusmodi, ut eos dulcis sonus, aut mollis cantus, aut præclara species possit allicere; nullâ denique ejus generis illecebrâ capiuntur. At humanum genus cum naturâ beatis illis mentibus inferius sit, omni vi, studioque contendit, ut quo ad ejus fieri potest, illas assequatur. . . . Videsne virginitatis præstantiam; quomodo terrarum incolas sic afficiat, ut qui corpore vestiti sunt, eos incorporeis mentibus exæquet? Quâ enim, quæso, re differebant ab angelis Elias, Elisæus, Joannes, veri virginitatis amatores? nullâ, nisi quod mortali naturâ constabant. Nam cetera si quis diligenter inquirat, hi nihilominus affecti reperientur, quam beatæ illæ mentes: et idipsum, quod inferiore conditione videntur esse, in magnâ est eorum laude ponendum. Lib. de Virgin.

† Vincent. Bellovac., in Spec. Hist., lib. xxiii. cap. 99.

prayer so acceptable to Him, and she soon appeared with her face covered with sores, and overspread with a most loathsome leprosy; so that, having become an abomination in the sight of her earthly spouse, she was left free to devote herself to her Heavenly Bridegroom in the cloister. And that there might be no doubt that this disfigurement was bestowed as a safeguard of her virginity, God was pleased that she should recover all her former charms as soon as she had pronounced the solemn vow of perpetual virginity. Like unto her was that most innocent youth mentioned by St. Ambrose, who, on becoming aware that he was too freely admired by certain women, whose birth was more noble than their conduct, bravely took a razor and began to slash his face, so as to become hideous in the eyes of the world but an object of loving approval before God and His holy Angels. Such, too, were those heroic nuns of Ptolemais, who, seeing that the city was on the point of being stormed by the Saracens, and fearing a far more formidable assault on their chastity, in company with their Abbess, cut off their noses; so that the Saracens, beholding them all bathed in their blood, and rendered thus hideous, were horror-stricken, and slaughtered them all as victims of chastity.

403. Those vain women and gay youths that set such store on the charms of the body, and care not for the supernatural loveliness of their chastity, may well blush at these examples. They are puffed up by their good looks; they strut about and make parade thereof in the public ways; they cultivate their appearance with assiduous care; they seek to preserve it with cosmetics, paints, perfumes, and powders: and yet take so little heed of the angelic beauty of purity, that they suffer themselves to be robbed of it by a glance, a smile, a deceitful promise, some trifling present. Unhappy creatures! soon will they find themselves deprived of the beauty both of body and soul:—of the body, which will soon be a prey to worms; of the soul, which they have disfigured by their vices.

CHAPTER III.

THE REASON WHY CHASTITY RAISES US TO HOLINESS, AND LIKENS US TO THE HOLY ANGELS.

404. ALL our perfection and sanctity consists, as we have elsewhere said—following St. Thomas—in the union of our soul with its last end, which is God. All the beauty of the Angels, not that which is a gift of their nature, but the perfection of God's grace, consists in their union with their Maker, by means of a consummate charity. Now we are disposed to this union by charity more than by any other moral virtue; and hence it helps us, more than any other virtue, to liken ourselves in holiness and supernatural beauty to the highest princes of the heavenly court. I would not venture to utter such an encomium of holy purity, had it not first proceeded from the lips of Eternal Truth. *Blessed are the clean of heart,* says our Saviour, *for they shall see God.* Here below they shall see Him through the veil of faith, by the simple eye of contemplation; hereafter they shall behold Him, face to face, and shall be united to Him in the degree that shall be awarded to them as the recompense of their purity.* Whence St. Augustine infers that chastity holds an eminent and glorious rank among virtues; for it alone, he writes, leads to the vision of God in the manner in which this is possible in the present life, and in a perfect way in the world to come. On the other hand, the contrary vice steeps us in misery, since in this life it completely parts us from God, and in the next it wholly deprives us of Him, and plunges us into never-ending torments.†

405. The reason why unchastity sets up such a barrier between God and the soul, while purity draws us so close to Him, is

* Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt. Matth. v. 8.

† Gloriosum, et insignem inter ceteras virtutes castitas et munditia locum tenet: quia ipsa sola est, quæ mundas mentes hominum præstat videre Deum. Unde ipsa veritas ait: *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt:* ac sine contrario diceret: illi vero miseri sunt, quorum corda sunt carnali concupiscentiâ polluta, quia æternas mergentur in pœnas. Serm. de Temp. 249.

obvious; for nothing so darkens the mind and indisposes it for the knowledge of divine things as impurity. On the other hand, nothing so enlightens the understanding and raises it to the perception of God's greatness as purity of body and cleanness of heart. So true is this, that St. Thomas shows the main purpose of chastity to be divine contemplation, by which, with a simple and steady gaze, we behold the perfections of God.* And these views rest on the solid ground of those words wherein the Apostle teaches that the foregoing of fleshly delights helps us much to give ourselves to prayer; to say which comes to this, that it greatly disposes the soul to receive that light in which, when praying, we contemplate the things of God.†

406. But if it be true that chastity, more than any other virtue, uplifts us to the understanding of divine things, who cannot see that it has a right to claim as its special attribute to attract our hearts to God, and to knit them with Him in the bonds of holy love? For as the sun's rays are the vehicle of the genial heat to all sublunary bodies, so too the knowledge of the divine perfections is the vehicle of that sacred fire which kindles the flames of charity, and makes us become one with God.‡

407. It has pleased God to give a memorable attestation to this truth in the person of St. Gregory of Nazianzus.§ From his earliest years, the Saint had most jealously guarded his chastity. Neither the evil examples of his companions, nor the seductions of the senses and the temptations of the world, could ever induce him to sully the white robe of his virginal innocence. While pursuing his philosophical studies at Athens, he had one day the following vision: He seemed to himself, while engaged in the study of a certain book, to behold at either side of him a female

* Si quis abstinet a delectationibus corporalibus, ut liberius vacet contemplationi, pertinet hoc ad rectitudinem rationis. Ad hoc enim pia virginitas ab omni delectatione venereâ abstinet, ut liberius divinæ contemplationi vacet. Virginitas ordinatur ad bonum animæ secundum vitam contemplativam, quod est cogitare ea, quæ Dei sunt. 2, 2, q. 132. art. 2 et 4.

† Nolite fraudare ad invicem, nisi forte ex consensu ad tempus, ut vacetis orationi. I. ad Cor. vii. 5.

‡ Qui adhæret Domino, unus spiritus est. I. ad Cor. vi. 17.

§ Rufin. In Prologo ad Libros S. Greg. Nazianz.

most comely and most venerable in appearance. The chaste youth, who was exceedingly careful of his purity, regarded them with a troubled eye and, with a certain abruptness, asked them who they were and what they wanted. Then clasping him in a pure embrace to their bosoms, "Fear not," cried they; "we are thy friends and constant companions." One said: "I am Chastity;" the second, "I am Wisdom. God has sent us to abide for ever with thee, because thou hast long since prepared for us a fitting dwelling in thy clean and purified heart."* At these words they disappeared, leaving us this most useful lesson, that where chastity is, wisdom abides:—wisdom, that is, the knowledge and relish of God—as the Angelic Doctor defines it; which enables us to taste His sweetness, and has most avail to unite us to Him in the bonds of love. Well, then, might St. Paul say that chastity brings sanctification to the soul, as being its source and cause; and with justice does our Blessed Lord assert, that the chaste are like unto the Angels of God, since their angelic purity keeps them close to God, even as the blessed spirits who behold Him in heaven.†

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHASTITY WAS ABOVE THE REACH OF THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS HEATHEN PHILOSOPHERS.

408. ANOTHER glorious prerogative of chastity is, that its lofty privileges cannot be known except by minds illumined with the light of faith. The sages of antiquity have fixed their gaze upon it, but without being able to discover its excellence; because their intellects were not strengthened by the divine and supernatural light. Aristotle, that eagle genius, knew it so little, that he scarce deems it worthy to be ranked among virtues. He

* Missæ sumus a Domino tecum habitare quia jucundum nobis, et satis mundum in corde tuo habitaculum præparasti.

† Neque nubent, neque nubentur: sed erunt sicut angeli Dei in cœlo. Matth. xxij. 30.

merely allows it a certain colouring of virtue, inasmuch (he writes) as it is the way to, or predisposition for, the acquirement of other moral virtues.* Plato came to such a pitch of folly, that, as St. Augustine records of him, he deemed it a great sin in himself to have lived in continency; and, to atone for his fancied guilt, the wretched man went so far as to offer sacrifices to nature, the mother of all things.† The far-famed Socrates blushed not to own that he cherished within him impure attachments, though, as Cassian says, he abstained from the corresponding outward acts. When a physiognomist had said, in presence of his disciples, that their master was addicted to the most abominable excesses, they, being roused to indignation, laid hold of him as if about to tear him to pieces, thinking that he had uttered too gross a slander against their master. But Socrates told them to forbear, "For," he said, "I should really be what this man has described, did I not keep myself from the actual perpetration of such excesses."‡ Whence the view of this illustrious ascetic was that the sages of old not only did not possess true chastity, but that they never attained the knowledge of it, in spite of all their deep philosophical researches; since, although they refrained from some of the more shameful deeds, they still held in no esteem that purity of the mind and cleanness of heart in which this virtue abides, as in its own proper habitation, and makes display of its charms.§

409. Tertullian bears the same witness concerning the Gentile

* Arist. Ethic., lib. vii.

† Plato sacrificâsse naturæ perhibetur, ut (perpetua ejus continentia) tamquam peccatum aboluiretur. Lib. De Verâ Relig., cap. 3.

‡ Quiescite, sodales, etenim sum, sed me contineo. Apertissime igitur non solum assertione nostrâ, sed etiam ipsorum (nempe philosophorum) professione monstratur, consummationem tantummodo impudicitiæ, id est commixtionis turpitudinem violentâ ab illis necessitate compressam: non tamen desiderium de cordibus eorum, et oblectationem illius passionis exclusam. Cassian., Coll. xiii., cap. 5.

§ Philosophos nunquam credendum est talem animi castitatem, qualis a nobis exigitur, assecutos, quibus injungitur, ut non solum fornicatio, sed ne immunditia quidem nominetur in nobis. Habuerunt autem illi quamdam portiunculam castitatis, id est abstinentiam carnis, ut tantum a coitu libidinem coercerent: hanc autem internam mentis, ac perpetuam corporis puritatem, non dicam opere assequi, sed nec cogitatione potuerint.

women, who knew not the true God: affirming that in them there was no real modesty.* And St. Augustine alleges the same reason for this as we have mentioned above, namely, that being deprived of the light of faith, they might indeed possess a sort of counterfeit chastity, but true chastity, whether virginal or that of the married state or of widowhood, they could not have.† For it is faith which reveals to us all the charms, all the loveliness of chastity, and discovers to us the immeasurable good with which it endows the soul that possesses it, as well as the everlasting bliss it wins for us in heaven. Take away the motives to chastity which faith suggests, and all character and lustre of virtue fail it, and leave but a faint outline of themselves. If, then, the mind be deprived of the light of faith, it will not, with the weak light of reason, be able to discern in chastity certain virtuous motives, which escape its glance the more easily as they are spiritual and raised above the senses. Thus some persons will forbear from an impure deed for very shame—for the disgrace and infamy which may attach to it—but not from a really virtuous motive; so that they will be chaste in seeming, but not in reality, and will verify the maxim of St. Augustine, who says that "in the Gentiles there was no true virtue, because they had not the true faith."‡

410. Nor will it serve to object, as a notable instance of chastity among the Gentiles, the Roman lady, Lucretia; who, having been violated by the son of Tarquin, acquainted her husband Collatinus, and her kinsman Brutus, with the outrage, that they might avenge it, and then slew herself with her own hands; for she was not impelled to this by love of chastity, but rather by the weak-mindedness that could not bear up against the injustice and infamy of so vile an outrage. That was, indeed, a heroic act of

* A fœminis nationum abest continentia veræ pudicitiæ: quia nihil verum in his, quæ Deum nesciant præsidem, et magistrum veritatis. De Cultu Fœmin.

† Vera igitur pudicitia sive conjugalis, sive vidualis, sive virginalis dicenda non est, nisi quæ veræ fidei mancipatur. Lib. i. De Nuptiis, cap. 4.

‡ Non est in ethnicis vera justitia, quia justus ex fide vivit. Lib. iv. in Julian. Pelagian., cap. 3.

chastity which Eusebius relates of Sophronia, a Roman lady, illustrious for her birth, but still more illustrious for her faith.* This lady, no less beautiful than virtuous, was illicitly loved by the tyrant Maxentius, who, despairing of gaining his wishes with her free consent, betook himself to violence, and sent his emissaries to drag her to the palace. She acquainted her husband, who was Prefect of Rome, with the summons of the wicked Emperor; but seeing him faint-hearted and perplexed by the danger she was in of sacrificing either her honour or her life, she begged the officers of the tyrant to allow her a little time to get ready. She then retired to her chamber, not indeed to deck herself out with the ornaments of vanity, but to recommend herself to God in fervent prayer for help in so great a trial. While she prayed, her heart was moved with an extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Ghost; she put forth her hand to a dagger, plunged it into her breast, and fell bleeding before God, in homage to holy chastity. This, if you like, was a heroic act of chastity; for this virtuous lady, in obedience to a divine inspiration, laid violent hands upon herself, not to escape the dishonour which follows on sin, but to flee sin, which involves, as its chastisement, dishonour and disgrace; she chose to die, not to avenge the stain inflicted on her honour, but in order not to dim the lustre of her virtue.

411. No less heroic was another action related by Eusebius,† of a mother and her two virtuous daughters, who cheerfully faced death rather than fall into the hands of impure and lascivious men. They had been brought by soldiers into the city of Antioch for no other purpose than that of being slaughtered in public, or of being sold by public auction, if they refused to deny the faith. The mother, being beside herself with grief at the barbarous violence which she saw done to herself and to her children, said to them: "You see, dear daughters of mine, to what straits we are reduced. The violence of these barbarians has no other object than to rob you either of your chastity or of your faith. And shall it be that your virginal bodies that I have guarded with so jealous care, and have never allowed to be exposed even to

* Euseb., lib. iv. cap. 17.
† Lib. viij. cap. 12.

the air, shall now be laid bare before all in an infamous brothel? No, dear daughters; such a misfortune must never befall us; neither are we so weak that we should fear loss of existence rather than loss of faith, nor is our honour of so little account that we should value it less than this passing life! Let us be beforehand, my children, with these cruel monsters, and with their outrages: let us, by a glorious death, baffle the schemes of this deceitful world, which with so ferocious a violence drags us to an unchaste life. Courage, my children; better is an honourable death than an unchaste life."* These words kindled within the breasts of the virtuous maidens an unwonted ardour, which made them despise death for the defence of their virginity. As soon as their mother saw them both inflamed with the sacred fire which the Holy Spirit had kindled in their hearts, she waited until the conveyance in which they were borne had reached the banks of a river; and having found some pretext for a short stoppage, she alighted, in company with her daughters. The soldiers meanwhile had withdrawn, out of a sense of decency. So the mother first of all plunged into the main stream of the river; her two daughters followed; and thus, like stainless doves, rendered yet purer in these waters, they passed from the banks of the river to everlasting glory. Let Lucretia, idolater and unbeliever as she was, stand by this stream, and witness the heroic chastity of these maidens; they faced death, not out of indignation nor from the raging desire to avenge an affront put upon their honour, but out of a love for chastity, and a zeal for its defence; with which they were inspired, not by an ill-regulated passion, but by a mighty impulse from their Heavenly Bridegroom.

412. If ever these pages should chance to meet the eye of some heedless youth, or imprudent maiden, who, for a deceitful glance,

* Quid ergo nunc agimus, videtis: quia omnis ista vis aut a Deo nos studet aut a pudicitiâ separare. Prostituentur ergo publicis lupanaribus membra, quæ aer pene ipse publicus habuit incognita? Non, quæso, filiæ, quia nec tam parva nobis in Deo fides est, ut mortem pertimescamus, nec tam despecta pudicitia, ut vivere etiam cum turpitudine cupiamus. Præveniamus carnificum impuras manus, et impudicorum præripiamus incursus, mundumque hunc, qui nos ad impuram et impudicam compellit et pertrahit viam, purâ et pudicâ morte damnemus.

or some expression of affection, would allow the virginal lily of chastity to be snatched away; or who would be induced to trample it under foot by some filthy imagination, or some impure temptation; how should they not blush at the example of these unconquerable heroines, who cheerfully laid down their life rather than suffer so fair a flower to be wrested from their grasp! That pagans failed to set due store by chastity, I can full well understand:—they were like purblind moles, without eyes to distinguish its peerless charms; or, if they had eyes, they were carnal eyes, and thus unable to dicsern spiritual beauties. But that a Christian, whose inward eyes are illumined by the light of faith, who knows full well the charms of this virtue, having discovered its price, utility and advantages, and the rewards it earns for the souls that have known how to cherish it, should make but little account of it, nay, even despise it, set it at nought and trample it under feet for a vile and momentary gratification: this is what I never could understand.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST MEANS OF PRESERVING CHASTITY, WHICH IS TO BEWARE OF FAMILIAR INTERCOURSE WITH THOSE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX.

413. That lilies and other choice plants may be able to preserve their vigour entire and intact, it is necessary that the garden be fenced round by a thick hedge: failing this safeguard, these beauteous flowers will not only be plucked off by the hands of men, but will also be trodden down by the beasts of the field. So, too, in order that the bloom of chastity may be preserved from touch, it is necessary to set up a hedge of watchful care, and keep off all persons who might possibly destroy its beauty; as may be done in the case of men by women, and in the case of women by men. The Holy Ghost warns us not to deal familiarly with a strange woman, for that many have come to ruin by that means; nor is

this to be marvelled at, for her words are fire—there is fire in her gestures, fire in her glances, by which lust is kindled into a blaze of impurity.* St. Bernard adds to this a sentence which is most expressive of the danger that lurks in this familiar intercourse. To converse, he says, continually with women, and yet not to sully the white garment of chastity, is a greater wonder than to recall the dead to life. He then breaks out into these emphatic words: "Thou canst not raise the dead, which would be a far less wonder, and yet wouldst have me believe that thou canst have frequent intercourse with women without falling into grievous sin, which would be much more difficult."†

414. St. Jerome strikes terror into those rash men who, without fear of a fall, expose themselves daily to this peril; recalling the example of several worthies mentioned in the holy Scriptures, who, through frequent intercourse with women, were betrayed into lamentable excesses. "Samson," he says, "stronger than a lion and harder than a rock, who, alone and unarmed, withstood a thousand, leaving some wounded and others slain on the field, lost his strength through his familiar dealing with Dalila, a weak woman. David, that man according to God's own heart, chosen as the organ of the Holy Ghost to announce to the world the Messias Who was to come, fell into the abyss of adultery and murder by a mere glance at Bersabee. Solomon, whose lofty mind embraced all things, from the cedar of Libanus to the hyssop that springs out of the wall, by whose mouth wisdom sang her own praises, became, by his want of caution in dealing with women, so infatuated with them as to fall away from God, and to offer impious incense to strange deities. And, lest any one should place too much reliance on the ties of blood, let him call to mind the fall of Amnon, who, through too free an intercourse with his sister Thamar, fell into crimes from the thought of which our very

* Propter speciem mulieris alienæ multi perierunt: et ex hoc concupiscentia quasi ignis ardescit. . . . Speciem mulieris alienæ multi admirati, reprobi facti sunt: colloquium enim illius quasi ignis ardescit. Cum muliere alienâ ne sedeas omnino. Eccl. ix. 11.

† Cum fœminâ semper esse, et non cognoscere fœminam, nonne plus est, quam mortuum suscitare? Quod minus est, non potes, et quod majus est vis credam tibi? Serm. 56 in Cant.

nature shrinks."* If, then, through the frequent and continual intercourse with women, the incorruptible cedars of Libanus, the immovable pillars of the faith, have fallen, can it be expected that they can keep their feet who, like feeble reeds, bow to the shock of the slightest temptation?

415. "Keep, then, away," says this holy Doctor elsewhere, "keep away from those dwellings where thou must either conquer or die. Who would ever lie down to sleep close to a viper which, if it bite him not, will surely keep him in constant fear of its poisoned fangs? Is it not far better to secure one's self against perishing by keeping out of danger, than by a lucky chance not to perish when on the very edge of the precipice?"†

416. And when the heretic Vigilantius objected to these prudent warnings of St. Jerome, that it was far more glorious to conquer, after braving the occasions, than to flee from them, the holy Doctor replied, that, in our conflict with the senses, there are two ways of gaining the victory—using the shield or our feet; the former when we face the danger, the latter when we fly from it. Now, in this sort of warfare I prefer, he writes, to conquer by flight rather than by combat, for by flying from dangerous objects and persons the victory is assured; but if we expose ourselves in the fight to dangerous occasions, success is at best only doubtful. But what folly to leave a certainty for a mere chance! And he repeats what he had said elsewhere, that there is no safety in lying down by a serpent, for though it may possibly not bite, yet there is always danger that it may do so, and thus kill by its venom.

* Sampson leone fortior, et saxo durior, qui et unus mille persecutus est armatos, in Dalilæ mollescit amplexibus. David secundum cor Dei electus, et qui per venturum Christum sancto sæpe ore cantaverat, postquam deambulans super tectum domûs suæ, Bersabeæ captus est nuditate, adulterio junxit homicidium. . . . Salomonem, per quem se cecinit ipsa Sapientia, qui disputavit a cedro Libani usque ad hyssopum quæ exit per parietem, recessit a Domino, quia amator mulierum fuit. Et ne quis sibi sanguinis propinquitate confideret, in illicitum Thamar sororis Amnon frater exarsit incendium. Ad Eustoch., De Custod. Virgin.

† Quid tibi necesse est in eâ versari domo, in quâ necesse habes quotidie aut perire aut vincere? Quis unquam mortalium juxta viperam securos somnos capit? Quæ etsi non percutiat, certe sollicitat. Securius est perire non posse, quam juxta periculum non periisse. Ep. De Vit. Suspect. Cont.

By this he meant that, as we do not allow ourselves to be deluded by vain hopes into exposing the life of our mortal bodies to danger, so neither ought we to allow ourselves to be misled in the like manner to risk the life of the soul, by unnecessary intercourse with persons of the opposite sex.*

417. St. Augustine is quite of the same mind with St. Jerome when, in a homily to his people, he says that we should betake ourselves to flight, if we really wish to win the victory in temptations to impurity; that, in such encounters, flight is not to be thought shameful, if we would earn the glorious palm of chastity.† If, he continues, any one who is careless of his eternal welfare should assert that he holds familiar intercourse with women and yet maintains the full lustre of his chastity, I would reply that this is a miserable and far too perilous presumption, since very many there are who, placed in such dangers, have flattered themselves that they should come out victorious and, in the long run, have been shamefully worsted.‡

418. The holy Fathers express themselves with the same clearness and energy when treating of the danger incurred by a familiar intercourse with persons of the opposite sex; for as it is impossible that straw should be often set near the fire without at length being kindled, or that water should be mingled with earth without mud being formed, neither is it possible that a man can

* Fateor imbecillitatem meam. Nolo spe pugnare victoriæ, ne perdam aliquando victoriam. Si fugero, gladium declinavi: si stetero, aut vincendum mihi est, aut cadendum. Quid enim necesse est certa dimittere, et incerta sectari? aut scuto, aut pedibus mors vitanda est. Tu qui pugnas, et superari potes, et vincere. Ego cum fugero, non vinco in eo quod fugio; sed ideo fugio ne vincar. Nulla securitas est, vicino serpente dormire. Potest fieri, ut me non mordeat; tamen potest fieri, ut aliquando me mordeat. Adversus Vigilantium, Epist. 2.

† Contra libidinis impetum, apprehende fugam, si vis invenire victoriam, nec tibi verecundum sit fugere, si castitatis palmam desideras obtinere. Serm. de Temp. 230, cap. 1.

‡ Sed forte negligens quisque, et minus de animæ suæ salute sollicitus respondet, et dicit: Ecce ego familiaritatem habeo mulierum, et exterarum, et tamen castitatis ornamenta custodio. Infelix est, et nimium periculosa ista præsumptio. Multi enim, dum se putabant vincere, victi sunt. Eod. Serm., cap. 2.

hold frequent and familiar intercourse with a woman who meets his fancy, without kindling some spark of impurity in his breast, without defiling his conscience with the foul mire of some sin. St. Basil gives the following reason for this danger. He says that it is easier to overcome temptations which have an element of horror, harshness, and malice about them—as, for instance, those caused by sorrows, affronts, insults, losses, failures—than those which hold forth to us the sweets of gratification; since human nature shrinks from the former as painful, while it clings to the latter as being delectable.* Now, the temptation which arises from the too free intercourse of persons of various sexes is a soft affection which (far from rejecting it with abhorrence) we cherish within ourselves on account of its conformity to our natural inclination and which, as it degenerates into a guilty attachment, brings us to the gates of death and irreparable ruin. Hence the holy Fathers might well say, that against so pernicious an evil there is no other resource than to flee the presence of vipers that imbue the soul with their pleasant venom.

419. We may see with what good reason the holy Fathers speak in this tone, from a fact which St. Gregory relates, and for which he alleges as many witnesses as there were inhabitants of the place where it came to pass.† Andrew, Bishop of Fondi, being but a simple priest, kept at his house, perhaps for domestic service, a virgin consecrated to God by a vow of perpetual chastity. On being raised to the episcopal dignity, he resolved not to dismiss her, relying on his own virtue and the purity and singular modesty of the guileless maiden. It came to pass meanwhile, that a Jew, travelling from the province of Campania, reached at dusk the foot of the beautiful hill on the summit of which the city of Fondi is built. The hour being late, and the night overcast, he would not run the risk of continuing his journey, but made up his mind to take shelter in a certain temple which he chanced to meet with, dedicated to Apollo. Although

* Malum omne facilius vincitur, quam voluptas: quia illud, quidquid est, horrendum est; hoc blandum est. De Bono Pudicitiæ.

† Nec res est dubia, quam narro, quia pene tanti in ea testes sunt, quanti et ejusdem loci habitatores existunt. Dial., lib. iij. cap. 7.

he had no faith in Jesus Christ, yet he was seized with a certain apprehension, inspired partly by the darkness of the night, partly by the lonely spot, and the very walls of the profane temple; and continued signing his forehead and breast with the sign of the Cross. In the middle of the night, being wide awake (for terror had not allowed him to close his eyes in sleep), he beheld a crew of infernal spirits enter the temple and, last of all, one whose stature, presence and gestures showed him to be their chief. At his arrival, a splendid throne was at once prepared in the middle of the temple, on which he seated himself with an air of majesty; and then, his followers presenting themselves before him with a profound obeisance, began to give him an account of the sins which, in the course of the day, they had made divers persons commit by their temptations. After a while, one, who in wickedness surpassed his fellows, presented himself, and began to tell, with a boastful air, how he had put certain foul thoughts into the mind of Andrew, the Bishop of the neighbouring city, concerning a woman consecrated to God; and how, the preceding night, he had induced him to give her, by way of endearment, a slap on the back. Hearing this, the demon-chief greatly rejoiced; for, taking into account the holiness of the man who had thus been made to fall, it was looked upon as an important conquest, and he encouraged his subject to carry out what he had so well begun. He then, turning his face to the corner where the Jew lay hid, all trembling with horror, cried, "Ho, there! who is this, hiding in the temple?" The fiends flocked around him, and gave tokens of perceiving that he had signed himself with the sign of the Cross, saying, in a tone of great surprise, "Woe! woe! this is a vessel void of divine grace, yet is it sealed with the holy sign!"* Saying this, the whole tribe vanished, and the poor Jew was left alone, half-dead with fright. The next morning at daybreak he waited on the Bishop, and told him fully all he had seen and heard in the foregoing night. The Prelate wanted at first to conceal his guilt, for very shame; but seeing it was so faithfully brought home to him in all its details, he humbly confessed it, begged pardon of God, and baptized the Jew, who,

* Væ! Væ! vas malum, et signatum.

under the terror caused by the vision, determined to become a Christian.

420. The reader must not run away with the notion that this Bishop was an immoral or indiscreet man; for, on the contrary, St. Gregory attests that he was a person of great virtue, and most watchful in all that concerned chastity.* Nevertheless, by frequent intercourse with even a most virtuous woman, he had begun to transgress; and unless God had, by an extraordinary Providence, come to his help in time, he would most likely have fallen into the most grievous and, it may be, irreparable excesses. Who, then, can fancy himself secure in this frequent and unchecked commerce with persons open to suspicion, while the saints, and those who are most solidly grounded in virtue, fail under such a trial? Unquestionably no one, save such as have become foolhardy through a vain self-reliance.

CHAPTER VI.

IT IS SHOWN BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE FATHERS THAT THIS PRECAUTION ESPECIALLY BEFITS PERSONS CONSECRATED TO GOD, BY THE VOW OF CHASTITY.

421. St. Augustine, after inculcating on every one (as we have quoted above) the necessity of avoiding the conversation and familiar intercourse of women, proceeds to give a fearful warning to the Clergy and Religious; telling them most positively that unless they take careful heed of such dangerous occasions, they will most surely soon slip adown the precipice, and come to ruin.†

* Hic venerabilis vir, cum vitam multis plenam virtutibus duceret, seque sub sacerdotali custodiâ in continentiæ arce custodiret.

† Unde, fratres carissimi, ab omnibus christianis, præcipue tamen clericis, et monachis, indigna, et inhonesta familiaritas fugienda est: quia sine ullâ dubitatione, qui familiaritatem non vult vitare suspectam, cito labitur in ruinam. Serm. de Temp. 250, cap. 1.

St. Gregory further adds, that whoever has bound himself by an irrevocable engagement to holy chastity, must not venture to dwell under the same roof with women, on account of the risk of some ruinous fall, or some sudden surprise on the part of the attractive object.* The reader will, therefore, not be astonished to hear St. Jerome rebuke with some harshness, and in a tone of deep abhorrence, the abuse committed by those Ecclesiastics who are ever buzzing around women, are constantly with them, sit with them at table, live under the same roof, and wish to have their services in the affairs of the house: so that they seem to have everything of the husband except the name.† The Saint could not but be aware of the ruin awaiting such persons; hence, he speaks of this abuse with such energy and in terms of such strong disapproval.

422. But far more to the purpose is what we find stated by St. Cyprian on this point, in his book *De Singularitate Clericorum*, which Baronius acknowledges as a genuine production of the great Doctor. Addressing his clergy, he tells them that by reason of the abuse which had obtained with many Ecclesiastics, of living with women, he was compelled to acquaint them with a rigorous prohibition revealed to him by God against such clergy as dwell under the same roof with women.‡ He then goes on to say, that although the authority of his word might suffice to convince all whom it concerned of the truth of this divine prohibition; yet, as some would not be wanting to turn this revelation to ridicule, even as Joseph's brothers mocked at his

* Qui corpus suum continentiæ dedicant, habitare cum fœminis non præsumant: ne ruina mentem tanto repentina subripiat, quanto ad hoc, quod male concupiscitur, etiam præsentia concupitæ formæ famulatur. Dial. lib. iij. cap. 7.

† Videas nonnullos accinctis renibus, pullâ tunicâ, barbâ prolixâ, a mulieribus non posse discedere; sub eodem manere tecto; simul inire convivia; ancillas juvenes habere in ministerio; et præter vocabulum nuptiarum omnia esse matrimonii. Epist. ad Rusticum.

‡ Quia nunc de fœminarum commoratione vulgariter inter vos quidam ignominiose devoluti sunt, etiam de hâc re specialiter vobis Domini correctionem scribere compulsus sum; qui miserum me pro vestrâ negligentiâ cum severitate conveniens, mandare præcepit, ne clerici cum fœminis commorentur.

dreams, he would confirm it by the authority of the sacred Scriptures, that all might see how God had long since forbidden in Holy Writ, what it had pleased Him to forbid by this revelation. He then quotes a saying of King Solomon, wherein God forbids us to frequent the company of women. How great must be the evil resulting from this unrestrained intercourse, in those who are consecrated to the divine service, may be seen by the fact that God, departing from the usual course of His providence, was pleased to command this holy prelate rigorously to prohibit it to his clergy.

423. As Possidius bears witness in his life of St. Augustine, not only did this holy Doctor forbid his house to strange women, but he excluded even his own sister, though a widow and devout withal, and though she was a Superior of many virgins consecrated to God; nor would he allow entrance to his nieces or cousins. An exception is made in favour of these by the canons of the holy Councils; the Saint, however, was wont to say, that although, on account of the ties of blood, these women live under no suspicion, yet other women who come to wait upon them, or to visit them, for business or for pleasure, may prove a snare, or give rise to scandal. Moreover, he added, females ought not to live in the house of the Bishop or of any of the clergy, nor even come to visit them; because, although these women may not occasion any danger to the ministers of God, they may be the ruin of other persons who dwell in the house, or at the very least give a handle to the suspicions and murmurs of the wicked and evil-minded.† Thus did these holy men, assisted as they were by an extraordinary gift of God, speak; thus did they

* Et licet hæc admonitio solâ litterarum mearum auctoritate sufficeret: tamen ne somniatorem irrideat quisquam, sicut Joseph fratres irriserunt, scripturarum addimus firmitatem, ut omnes sciant hoc etiam modo per revelationem Dominum jubere, quod litteris cognoscitur ante jussisse.

† Illos qui cum episcopo, vel quolibet clerico forte manerent, ex illis omnibus fœminarum personis unâ commorantibus, aut adventantibus, tentationibus humanis posse perire; aut certe malis hominum suspicionibus pessime diffamari: ob hoc ergo dicebat numquam debere fœminas cum servis Deit etiam castissimis in unâ domo manere. Possidius. Vita S. August.

behave; such were their fears; and yet it is of by no means rare occurrence, that persons consecrated to God, even as these were, hold free and familiar intercourse with the opposite sex; and not content with keeping them at home, go and seek them out in other houses; they fear nothing; they are in dread of nothing. What wonder, then, that in a consecrated breast there lurks an impure soul? For that is but too true which we read in the book of Ecclesiasticus: *He that loves the danger shall perish in it.**

424. What has been said of men in regard of women holds good, nay, is far more applicable to women with respect to men; both because their sex demands greater retirement and modesty and because, by nature, they are more frail, more easily led by passion, more open to seduction through the craft of others, and consequently more liable to fall. Nor are they secured by vows or the practices of spiritual life; since, notwithstanding every precaution, they soon give way at the shock of temptation (as experience proves) and hence they should prize their retirement, if they have at heart the unblemished purity of their chastity.

425. The holy maiden mentioned, and extolled with highest praise, by Sulpicius Severus, was well aware of this truth. Having dedicated to God the flower of her virginity, she ever kept her chamber, as a dove keeps her nest, guarding herself from the sight of men, as the dove guards herself from encountering the hawk. The holy Bishop Martin, attracted by the fame of her singular virtue, went in person to visit her from the desire he had of making the acquaintance of so pure a virgin. But scarce had the holy maiden heard the news, than she forthwith gave him to understand that she would keep to the resolution she had held to for so many years, of not looking on the face of a man, and of never receiving any in her abode. At this message the saintly Prelate was in no way offended or disturbed, but greatly admired her spirit of retirement, and the jealous care with which she guarded the unsullied robe of her virginity. The historian, after relating this noble action, concludes as follows:—"Let maidens hearken to so memorable an example, and keep the

* Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit. Ecclus. iij. 27.

door of their abode closed even to the good, nor fear to keep even Priests at a distance, lest, peradventure, the wicked should gain access to them. Let the whole world listen, and be amazed; a virgin was so careful of her virtue that she would not allow herself to be looked upon even by the great Bishop Martin."*

426. But methinks I hear some gainsayer object, that I want to abolish all human intercourse. Charity demands that we should at times converse with women for their spiritual or temporal benefit, and sometimes imposes on us the necessity, sometimes shows us the fitness, of so doing. Hence, to withdraw entirely from intercourse with them would not be proper caution, but clownish rudeness. St. Cyprian, not I, shall answer this objection. He permits even clerics to visit ladies, or receive visits from them, when the necessity of charitable consolation or spiritual instruction requires.† But, he continues, this service should be rendered by ecclesiastics in such wise, that their deportment ever shine with a certain lustre of purity; that they carefully avoid all freedom of speech, gesture, look, and laughter, maintaining a placid severity blended with a gentle gravity, which may, like a hedge, be a safeguard to both parties against any passing beyond the bounds of decorum, and may inspire the woman not only with comfort, but likewise with reverence, respect and veneration, so as to fulfil the precept of the Apostle: *Let all things be done decently and in order.*‡

* Audiant, quæso, virgines istud exemplum, ut fores suas (si mali adire noluerint) etiam bonis claudant: et ne improbis sit accessus, ne vereantur excludere sacerdotes. Totus hoc mundus audiat; videri se a Martino virgo non passa est. Dial., lib. ii. cap. 18.

† Sunt equidem necessitates aliæ, quæ nos quoque privatim fœminas videre compellant; ut visitemus, ut solatia præbeamus, ut hortamenta vitalia salubriter intimemus.

‡ Nec tamen in his officiis minor cura agenda est pro moribus nostris, ut clarescant in nostrâ operatione indicia puritatis. Severitas non desit, quæ sub clerico fœminam possit astringere, ut ipsa consolationem nostram suscipiat cum tremore, et ita sentiat visitationis affectum, et clericum veneretur. Ac ne tardius sit evagari per singula, totum quidquid agimus honestum esse potest, si signa honestatis eluceant: sicut Apostolus Paulus universa complexus est dicens: *Omnia vestra honeste fiant.* De Singul. Cler.

427. But St. Jerome is not content that the clergy should keep up a due gravity of demeanour, in the visits which they pay to women, by reason of their functions. He further requires that when, for reasonable motives, clerics set foot in houses of women, they never enter alone, or engage with them, apart from others, in secret conversation; but that they have with them other persons as a safeguard to their virtue, as witnesses of their behaviour, and for the protection of their good name.* To which he adds that warning of the Holy Ghost: *Sit not at all with another man's wife.* And this was precisely the way in which St. Augustine used to behave, as we read in the life written of him by Possidius. When the holy Doctor met with women who asked to speak to him, he never entered their houses save in the company of his clerics; nor did he converse with them apart if the nature of the subject was not such as to require secrecy.† Let him, then, who has vowed his chastity to God employ the like precautions in his visits, and he need not fear any evil result. Whoever approaches the fire with due care and necessary circumspection, will be warmed by it, without receiving injury by being scorched.

CHAPTER VII.

OTHER MEANS FOR THE SAFE-KEEPING OF CHASTITY.

428. A most necessary means for preserving intact the fair lily of chastity is the mortification of the flesh and the custody of the senses. To keep no guard over the eyes, to allow them to wander

* Si propter officium clericatûs aut vidua visitetur, aut virgo, nunquam domum solus introeas. Tales habeto socios, quorum contuberniis non infameris. Solus cum solâ, secreto, et absque arbitro vel teste, non sedeas. Ad Nepotian.

† Si forte ab aliquibus fœminis, ut videretur, vel salutaretur, rogabatur, nunquam sine clericis testibus ad eas intrabat, vel solus cum solis nunquam est locutus, nisi secretorum aliquid interesset.

on every object, is incompatible with chastity. As the Holy Ghost says: *The fornication of a woman shall be known by the haughtiness of her eyes and by her eyelids.** To hold ill-regulated discourse, or to keep one's ears open to listen to it, is also irreconcilable with chastity; for unchaste words, says St. Jerome, are plain tokens of a corrupted heart.† And to listen to such words, continues the Saint, is to lay ourselves open to the assaults which, by means of them, are made upon the chastity of our neighbour.‡

429. To treat our flesh with indulgence, to refuse it no gratification, and yet expect it not to be restive, is sheer folly. The old adage says, that if a horse chafes under bit and bridle, his rack must be raised:—that is, he must be put on short allowance of food, and have his spirit tamed by the whip or the stick. The same plan must be pursued with our unruly flesh, lest it rebel against the spirit and hurry it on to unseemly deeds. Its food must be lessened by fasting, or at least by abstaining from dainties, and its pride must be brought down by hair-shirts and scourges. This was the remedy to which the Apostle had recourse against the rebellion of the senses, as he himself witnesses: *I chastise my body and bring it into subjection:* to subjection to reason; as a slave is brought into subjection to his master.§ To the like remedy did St. Jerome betake himself in those years when he was so wofully molested by the temptations of the flesh. "Then it was," he writes to Eustochium, "that I kept down the flesh rebelling against the spirit by whole weeks of rigorous fasting."‖ As the same holy Doctor relates, St. Hilarion made use of the like means in order not to yield to the assaults of the hellish foe who, in league with the flesh, had stirred up against him a violent con-

* Fornicatio mulieris in extollentiâ oculorum cognoscetur. Ecclus. xxvi. 12.

† Turpe verbum atque lascivum, nunquam de ore virginis proferendum, quibus signis libidinosus animus ostenditur, per exteriorem interioris hominis vitia monstrantur. Ad Eustoch., De Vitâ Paulæ.

‡ Nunquam verbum inhonestum audias. . . . Perditæ mentis homines uno frequenter, levique sermone, tentant claustra pudicitiæ. Ad Demetriad.

§ Castigo corpus meum, et in servitutem redigo. I. ad Cor. ix. 27.

‖ Repugnantem spiritui carnem hebdomadarum inediâ subjugabam.

flict of the senses. Indignant with himself for these uprisings of his rebellious flesh, and striking his breast with hard blows, as if he could thereby drive unholy thoughts from his mind, he was accustomed to say: "I will see to it, thou stubborn ass, that thou shalt not kick. I will give thee straw to eat instead of corn. I will slay thee with hunger and thirst; and will load and weary thee, so that thou wilt have to think rather how to seek for a little morsel to eat, than how to seek for pleasure." And, indeed, he sometimes let three or four days pass by, ere he allowed his fainting body any refreshment: and then he would sustain it merely with a few wild herbs, and a little juice of the same herbs to drink.*

430. Others have endeavoured to keep under the pride of the flesh by the fatigues of extraordinary toil, as Macarius, Abbot of Alexandria, who, to abate the rebellion of lust, took on his shoulder a heavy sack of sand, and carried it long distances through wild and desert places, in order to weaken, by this weighty burden, his unruly flesh. Being asked one day why he acted thus, he replied: "I am troubling him who is troubling me."† Again, Euphrasia, Abbess of a convent of nuns in the Thebais, in order to blunt the strength of temptation, often carried a heap of stones from one place to another, with great toil and copious sweat.‡ Others have endeavoured to keep under their unruly flesh by the weariness of intense study, as was the case with St. Jerome in the deserts of Scete, where he first led the life of a solitary, after leaving Rome. While there, to defend himself from unclean thoughts and the upheavings of lust, which never gave him a moment's peace, he betook himself to the study of Hebrew, under the tuition of a monk of Jewish race, who was a perfect master of that language. To conclude. Would we preserve our chastity undefiled, we must, says St. Basil, chastise our

* Iratus sibi, et pectus pugnis verberans, quasi cogitationes percussione manûs posset excutere: Ego, inquit, aselle, faciam, ut non recalcitres; nec te hordeo alam, sed paleis, fame te conficiam, et siti. . . . Herbarum ergo succo, et paucis caricis, post triduum et quatriduum, deficientem animam sustentabat. In Vitâ S. Hilar.

† Vexatorem meum vexo. Marulus, lib. iij. cap. 9.

‡ Idem, lib. iij. cap. 10.

whole body, as we would chastise a wild animal whom we wish to tame. We must keep it in subjection, and must check its every evil motion with the scourge of mortification. Else, if by a certain indulgence we slacken the reins of mortification, the same will befall us as happens to the drivers of carriages who, if they allow the reins to fall loose on the necks of unbroken steeds, are hurled down a precipice.* Chastity may be likened to the cinnamon plant, which grows amid rugged rocks and thick-set brambles. It flourishes not in pleasant lands abounding with delights, but springs from the rugged soil of self-denial, and has its increase amid the thorny briars of penitential inflictions.

431. But Cassian further reminds us that to preserve the bloom of chastity, besides fastings and bodily austerities, a profound humility is also required; for, as no vice can be subdued without this, so must we not hope otherwise to triumph over impurity, which is as opposed to chastity as light is to darkness.† If you inquire of St. Augustine why humility is so much needed for the maintenance of a steady continency, and especially of perpetual virginity, he answers, that pride is the canker that consumes and destroys those beauteous virtues which form the ornament and the charm of holiness; and hence, that whoever would keep himself pure and undefiled, must guard himself with the utmost watchfulness from the slightest particle of self-trust.‡ St. Gregory alleges, as a further reason, that pride blights and withers the fair blossoms of this virtue. "For," he says, "neither humility devoid of chastity, nor purity accompanied with pride, can be pleasing to

* Est totum corpus castigandum, ac feræ cujusdam instar cohibendum, et ab ipso adversus animam tumultus orientes, ratione veluti flagello, compesce di, ne frænum voluptati omnino laxando mens, veluti auriga ab equis contum cibus, et minime obtemperantibus misere feratur ac rapiatur. Homil. de Lege dis Gentilium Libris.

† Non sufficit solum jejunium corporale ad conquirendam et possidendam perfectæ castimoniæ puritatem . . . . nisi ante omnia fundata sit humilitas vera, sine quâ nullius penitus vitii unquam triumphus acquiri potest. Inst., lib. vi. cap. 1.

‡ Hoc bonum quanto magnum video, tanto et ne pereat futuram superbiam pertimesco. Non enim custodit bonum virginale nisi Deus ipse, qui dedit. Lib. de Virginit., cap. 51.

God. Whoever would be acceptable in His sight must strive after both these virtues."*

432. The man, then, who would keep chaste, must acknowledge that, of himself, he can neither attain to nor preserve this virtue; he must own that so fair a flower cannot spring forth from the filth of his vile body, unless God implant it and cultivate it by His grace, so that it wither not amid the defilements of the senses. He must ever stand in dread of his frailty, and put all his trust in God, Who never forsakes the lowly ones whose hope is not in themselves but in Him, and Who always protects them from any ruinous falls. This humble distrust of ourselves, this steady confidence in God, will keep us strong enough to withstand the upheavings of passion and the shock of temptation. The bees are said to ballast themselves in a high wind with small particles of sand, so as to secure that weight and solidity which may save them from being the sport of the tempest. In like manner, says St. Ambrose, "if you would not be at the mercy of every gust of temptation to carnal excess, you must steady yourself by a low esteem of what you are, and the knowledge of your own frailty, and lean by a firm trust on God."†

433. The lamentable falls of certain illustrious servants of God, that are recorded in Church history, had no other source than their want of humility, whereby, vainly presuming on their own strength, they exposed themselves rashly to danger, in punishment whereof God allowed them to fall. I select but one of the countless instances on record in the writings of the early Fathers, that we may learn by the fall of others to be humble and watchful.‡ An aged monk fell into a grievous illness, and seeing that the other monks took so much trouble for the recovery of his bodily health, he resolved to withdraw from the solitude, and to go and seek relief from his malady in Egypt, in order to spare his brethren so great an inconvenience as that of nursing him.

* Si castitatem humilitas deserat, vel humilitatem castitas relinquat, apud auctorem humilitatis et munditiæ, prodesse quid prævalet, vel superba castitas, vel humilitas inquinata? Moral., lib. xxi. cap. 3.

† Lib. de Virginit.

‡ Lib. de Fornic., n. 12.

"Do not go," said Abbot Moses to him; "you will run the risk of some grievous fall." He laughed at this warning, relying on his age and virtue, and replied to his Superior, that he could see no danger, as, being in a decrepit old age, the incentive to lust was now dead in him; and that the virtuous habits of a long life, spent chastely, rendered him proof against temptation. He therefore took his departure. On arriving, he was kindly received by the inhabitants of the place, and supplied with all that was necessary. After a while a maiden, inspired by the purest charity, undertook to attend upon him. By slow degrees charity begat a liking, which in its turn degenerated into passion, passion led him into a certain unreservedness and freedom of behaviour, and at length the aged monk, who fancied himself impeccable, fell into a grievous crime. What was worse, to his crime was soon joined a public and grave scandal, for the woman was found to be with child. It was well for him that he knew how to remedy by a deep humility the error into which his great pride had led him. After the birth of the child, he took the infant and returned, bearing him in his arms to the desert; and one day when all the monks were assembled in Church, he fell on his knees in their presence, and showed them all the proof of his sin, saying with tears: "Behold the fruit of my pride and disobedience; to such a depth as this am I fallen in my old age! Learn, brethren, by my example, not to rely on yourselves, and to be more prudent than I have been." Having said this he withdrew to his cell to do penance, leaving to all of us the memorable warning, that to rely on one's self, whatever our age, state, or degree of perfection, is to lean on a broken reed that will soon give way.

434. More than this, we may also infer, as a legitimate consequence, that prayer is necessary for the acquirement of chastity. He who acknowledges that of himself he cannot attain this virtue, implies that it must be the gratuitous and free gift of the divine bounty; and must have the lasting conviction, that it behoves him to implore it of God, both heartily and without ceasing. The author of the Book of Wisdom says: *As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, unless God gave it . . . I went to the Lord and besought Him, and said with my whole heart: God of*

my Fathers, etc.* St. Augustine did the like, as he informs us in his Confessions: "Thou commandest me, O Lord, to be continent; grant me then what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt."†

435. But you will say, this is a necessary means for the attainment not of chastity only, but of every other virtue—why, then, need it be specially mentioned? True, replies Cassian, the continued help of divine grace is needed in order to make progress in every virtue, and for the uprooting of every vice; but the victory over the vice which tends to defile purity cannot be won without a most special gift of God; as the Fathers have taught, and as is proved by the experience of those who have possessed the virtue of chastity in its perfection. Whence it follows that prayer is more needed for this virtue than for all the other virtues.‡ Thus, when the Apostle of the Gentiles was disquieted with the sting of the flesh, and assailed by the angel of Satan, who buffeted him with his temptations, the first thing that he did was to recommend himself heartily to God, and to renew again and again his prayers and supplications.§ Nor were his cries unheard, since God assured him that he would never want the grace enabling him always to preserve unsullied the fair robe of his chastity, and even to keep it constantly brighter and more undefiled.

436. But it must be borne in mind, that it is more than ever necessary to implore the divine aid, when temptations assail us. A king claims the help of the princes, his allies, when he is hemmed in by his foes, as it is then that he most stands in need of their

* Ut scivi, quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det . . . adii Dominum, et deprecatus sum illum, et dixi ex totis præcordiis meis: Deus patrum meorum, etc. Sap. viii. 21.

† Continentiam jubes: da quod jubes, et jube quod vis. Lib. x. cap. 29.

‡ Reverâ cum in omnibus virtutum profectibus, et cunctorum expurgatione vitiorum Domini opus sit gratiâ, atque victoriâ; in hoc præcipue peculiare beneficium Dei, ac speciale donum, et patrum sententiâ, et experimento purgationis ipsius manifestissime declaratus his, qui eam meruerint possidere. Inst., lib. vi. cap. 6.

§ Datus est mihi stimulus carnis meæ, angelus Satanæ, qui me colaphizet. Propter quod ter Dominum rogavi, ut discederet a me. II. ad Cor. xi. 7.

‖ Sufficit tibi gratia mea: nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur.

help. We must do likewise when the infernal enemy assails us with unclean suggestions; in other words, we must turn to God and cry out from our heart, *Lord, save us, we perish!** "Deliver me, O Lord, from the jaws of the lion, which gnaws me with his filthy temptations."† "Dost Thou not see, O God, that he rages round about me to slay, not my body, but my soul, that is dear to me?‡ Do Thou then deliver me, and help me with the mighty aid of Thy grace."

437. These were the arms wherewith the holy martyr Christopher overcame the temptations of two demons in visible shape—temptations which, to my judgment, were far more formidable than the assaults of the whole crew of invisible fiends who are in the bottomless pit below.§ He was shut up in a close and narrow dungeon, for no other crime than his constant confession of the faith of Christ. The tyrant, despairing of overcoming him by torments, tried to seduce him by pleasure. He therefore sent to the prison two women, Nicetas and Aquilina by name, both sisters and both prostitutes, who began to assail his virtue by words, looks, and gestures. At these assaults, so much the more formidable as they were pleasing and enticing, the holy martyr betook himself to the mighty resource of prayer, and, falling on his knees, began to implore God with tears to help him in so great a peril. This prayer was soon heard, for there shone in the prison a bright light, which banished every impure feeling from the hearts both of Christopher and of the two abandoned women—so enlightening their minds concerning the truth of our holy faith as to strengthen them to confess it, and even to seal it with their blood. The same light will come down from heaven into the dark chambers of our mind, to scatter all unclean thoughts; the same strength will be vouchsafed to us in order to steel our hearts against every unchaste affection, if, when assailed by our invisible foes, we betake ourselves to God, as did St. Christopher, with promptness and fervour.

* Domine, salva nos, perimus. Matth. viij. 25.
† Salva me ex ore leonis. Ps. xxi. 22.
‡ Tamquam leo rugiens circuit quærens quem devoret. I. Petr. v. 8.
§ Moral., lib. iv. cap. 7.

CHAPTER VIII

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE MATTER OF THIS ARTICLE.

438. First suggestion. Though the Director judge fit, in the guidance of his penitents, to follow opinions that are furthest removed from rigorism, he must not do so in the matter with which we are dealing in this Article, as his indulgence would only occasion some prejudice to the chastity of those under his charge. A rider who is guiding his horse down some steep descent does not slacken the rein but tightens it: for he fears lest the animal should stumble and fall into the mud. Now, there is no more slippery vice than impurity, no passion more unruly than that of carnal lust. If, then, the Director do not hold his penitents in check by means of the strictest and safest opinions and of the most rigid counsels, he will soon see them stumble, and bemire themselves in the filth of some grievous fall. Hence he must ever bear in mind and inculcate on his penitents, the opinion which is most common amongst theologians, and which teaches that in this vice there is no venial matter; that every transgression is grievous and every fall mortal: wherefore he must proceed with great fear and caution. But he must especially be particular in keeping women retired and confined within doors, since daily experience shows that females live most blamelessly when kept from intercourse with the opposite sex, but that when brought into contact with men they are very frail. Women are like the snow which, when kept below ground, preserves its unsullied whiteness, but when exposed to air and light, melts and gets befouled. Again, they may be likened to crystal which, when kept in a cabinet, remains pure and transparent, but is soon discoloured and loses all its brilliancy if exposed to every one's gaze and touch. He should listen to what St. Jerome wrote to Salvina, a noble Roman lady, who became a widow in the prime of life. The holy Doctor is not content that she should withdraw from conversation with strangers—he will not allow her that of her

men-servants—but advised her to deal with them by the intermediary of one of the oldest and most blameless of her household, and to communicate her orders through him.* Such are the views of the saints of greatest authority in God's Church. All may thus see with what rigour they must proceed in this matter.

439. Second suggestion. The Director should often impress on such of his penitents as aspire after chastity to be prompt in resisting the first assaults of temptation; for, as St. Gregory says, "if, when temptation arises within the heart, it is not forthwith rejected, it gains strength and vigour from our neglect and delay."† Hence it becomes more difficult to resist it. The Confessor will therefore warn his penitents that those unholy thoughts which arise in the mind, those impure emotions which are excited in the heart, are so many sparks of hell-fire cast into the soul by the demon, who well knows that it will find a fuel very apt to burst into a blaze; and that for this reason, unless these sparks are forthwith stamped out by an energetic resistance, they will light up a flame which will soon bring the poor soul to ruin. We must therefore behave just as we do when standing by the fire and a spark falls upon us: we do not suffer it to remain an instant, but shake it off at once. With the like eagerness should we shake off these sparks of hell-fire which, if wilfully kept for a few moments in the mind, burn the fair robe of purity and work in it mortal damage.

440. A lay brother begged St. Francis to allow him to keep a Psalter by him. "No," replied the holy Patriarch; "for, if you yield to this temptation, you will next be wanting the whole Breviary, and then you will be wishing for other books; and, as soon as you begin to learn a little, you will conceive the mad notion of being a Professor of Theology:"‡—meaning thereby that temptation grows and increases, if it be not smothered in the

* Quid facit vidua inter familiæ multitudinem? inter ministrorum greges? quos nolo contemnat ut famulos, sed ut viros erubescat. Certe si ambitiosa domus hæc officia flagitat, præficiat his senem honestis moribus, cujus honor dignitas dominæ sit.

† Si autem tentationi in corde nascenti festine non resistitur, hæc eâdem, quæ nutritur, morâ roboratur. Moral., lib. xxi. cap. 7.

‡ Chron. Francisc., lib. ij. cap. 22.

cradle in its earliest infancy. And this applies much more to our present subject, since temptations against chastity are, as was said, sparks of hell-fire; and if not forthwith stamped out they will, in a moment, cause a conflagration and destroy the sluggish and negligent soul.

441. Third suggestion. The Director will not be content that his penitent should discover every fault committed by him against holy purity, but he will further persuade him to manifest every thought and temptation against this virtue, as well as the occasions to which he has heedlessly exposed himself; because there is nothing better than this practice to give security against all evil. This is the advice given by Cassian: We have to wage a truceless war, by day and by night, against enemies who are at once invisible and bent on our ruin; nor are we engaged with one or two enemies, but with countless bands of ferocious adversaries, and, what is worse, defeat is by so much the more dangerous as our foes are the more enraged against us, and as their attacks are the more secret. Hence, we should faithfully follow the advice of our ghostly fathers and, setting aside all shame, manifest to them every unholy thought arising within our hearts.* By acting thus we shall be safe against the assaults and wiles of our hellish foes; as this great master of asceticism assures us.† He had just been saying that whoever is undeterred by shame from discovering to his spiritual guide the thoughts and emotions arising within him, will never be led astray by his enemy, crafty though he be.‡ The reasons are those which we have already mentioned. First, that the devil is like a thief, who, when discovered, takes to flight and

* Habet (homo) non adversus visibiles, sed invisibiles, atque immites hostes diurnum nocturnumque conflictum; nec contra unum, seu duos, sed contra innumerabiles catervas spirituale certamen: cujus casus tanto periculosior cunctis, quanto et infestior inimicus, et congressus occultior. Et ideo semper seniorum summâ cautione sunt sectanda vestigia, atque ad eos cuncta, quæ in nostris cordibus oriuntur, sublato confusionis velamine deferenda. Collat. ii., cap. 11.

† Quâ institutione formatus, non modo ad perfectam discretionis rationem quisque perveniet; verum etiam munitus, a cunctis insidiis inimici tutissimus permanebit. Ibid., cap. 11.

‡ Non valebit ignorationi ejus callidus hostis illudere, qui universas cogitationes in corde nascentes periculosâ verecundiâ nescit obtegere. Ibid., cap. 20.

hides. Secondly, that the soul, both in virtue of the counsels and exhortations of the Director and of the more plenteous grace which God gives it, as a reward of its candour, becomes stronger and braver for the conflict and, for this cause, surer of the victory.

442. Fourth suggestion. The Director should persuade his penitents who are harassed by the vice contrary to chastity, to take upon themselves some moderate penance, such as fasting, the hair-shirt, or discipline—according to what we observed in the seventh Chapter;—as these bodily austerities are of great avail for keeping under the pride of the flesh, and for obtaining of God a plenteous grace to withstand its assaults. Thus was the mother of St. Edmund Rich wont to act, for, while her boy was at his studies in some far-off city, she would hide either a hair-cloth or a discipline in the parcels of linen and clothes she sent him for his needs, that by mortifying his body with these instruments of penance, the youth might preserve unsullied the lily of his virginity. And, indeed, by this affliction of his innocent flesh, St. Edmund preserved his virginity to the end of his days; the Director will therefore employ the like means.

443. Fifth suggestion. The Director must bear in mind that, although virginity is a higher state than conjugal chastity, yet may a married person be more perfect and chaste than a virgin. This is the teaching of the Angelic Doctor. For such a one may be more ready and willing in his mind to observe continence, if it were required for God's service, than is another who in fact possesses the treasure of virginity; in which case the chastity of the married person will surpass that of the virgin, in affection though not in effect.* The holy Doctor alleges the authority of St. Augustine, who, writing to a virgin, exhorts her to speak as follows:—"Though unmarried, I am not better than Abraham who was married."† And he adds the reasons why she should

* Licet virginitas melior sit quam continentia conjugalis, potest tamen conjugatus melior esse quam virgo, duplici ratione: primo quidem ex parte castitatis, si scilicet ille, qui est conjugalis, habeat animum magis paratum ad virginitatem servandam, si oportet, quam ille, qui est virgo. 2, 2, q. 152, a. 4 ad 1.

† Ego non sum melior quam Abraham. De Bono Conjug., cap. 22.

speak thus: "For had it behoved Abraham to lead the life that I am leading, he would have led it with far greater perfection, while, had I to lead the life he led, my perfection therein would be far below that which he practised."* Further, St. Augustine compares the celibacy of St. John the Baptist with the wedded life of Abraham, and says that both, according to the divers circumstances of the times, were soldiers of Christ, with this difference only, that John had the gift of continence in very deed, while Abraham possessed it only in the habitual disposition of his heart.† I have said thus much in order that Directors may understand that they are not to content themselves with cultivating the fair flower of chastity only in the hearts of youths and maidens, of widows and ecclesiastics; but they must further labour to implant it in the breasts of persons joined in wedlock, since these also are capable of attaining a high degree of perfection in chastity, if they observe what has been explained in this Article; and especially if they act with a great detachment of soul, and preserve that continency which befits their state.

ARTICLE X.

On the Virtue of Meekness.

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN THE VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS CONSISTS, AND HOW IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM PATIENCE.

444. ACCORDING to St. Thomas, Meekness is a potential part of the fourth cardinal virtue, because in its modes of procedure it

* Et rationem postea subdit, dicens: quod enim nunc ego, melius ille egisset, si tunc agendum esset. Quod autem ille egit, sic ego non agerem, etiamsi nunc agendum esset.

† Augustinus dicit in libro de bono conjugali, quod Joannis cœlibatus, et

has a certain resemblance with temperance, in that it enables the soul possessed of it to refrain from extravagance and excess. It will, perhaps, seem to the reader, that the virtue of which I am going to treat in the present Article is no way different from patience, of which I spoke in the eighth Article; since both patience and meekness have one common aim, which is to enable us to bear up against the mishaps which encompass us about in this wretched life. But this would be a mistake, as the endurance of evil may be attained in two ways: either by moderating the grief which rises within us and fills our hearts with gloom on the occurrence of any misfortune, or by bridling the anger and indignation enkindled within us at an injury received—an emotion which tends to seek revenge. It is the part of patience to banish grief from our souls, by whatever species of evil it may be engendered; but it belongs to meekness to check the anger which is provoked by affronts, and to hinder the vengeance which this dark passion urges us to take. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas.* And it is true. For, as we call him patient who grieves not under the burden of his trials, who is not disquieted or troubled, who falls not into melancholy; so, do we call him meek who, under the strokes of insult, keeps down anger, kindles not into indignation, seeks not to avenge his wrongs. St. Ambrose is of the same mind, as he says the meek are they who have wholly overcome the passions of anger, of vengeance, of rage, and all spirit of discord.† In a word, the virtue of meekness is a soothing balm against the hot and impetuous emotions of anger: by its gentle unction, it calms or extinguishes them, and, rendering them amenable to reason, reduces them to due peacefulness; as the Angelic Doctor heretofore quoted expressly teaches.‡

Abrahæ connubium, pro temporum dispositione pro Christo militaverunt; sed Joannes continentiam in opere, Abraham vero in solo habitu habuit. Ut supra, in respons. ad 1.

* Dicendum, quod patientia dicitur habere opus perfectum in adversis tolerandis, ex quibus primo procedit tristitia, quam moderatur patientia; secundo ira, quam moderatur mansuetudo. 2, 2, q. 136. art. 6.

† Qui sunt mansueti, nisi quos nullus spiritus dissensionis exagitat, non ira perturbat, non sævitia exasperat, non rabies crudelitatis inflammat? In Ps. xxxix.

‡ Mansuetudo est, quæ secundum rationem rectam moderatur iras.

445. I will now set before the reader's eyes a lively image of both these virtues, which may enable him to see wherein they differ, and to discover the loveliness of both, so as to become enamoured of them. It shall be taken from St. Lidwina, a virgin most distinguished at once for patience and for meekness, according to the different nature of the evils that befell her.* We have already witnessed her patience amid the acute pains which she endured so constantly for thirty-eight whole years; let us now study her meekness under insult and outrage. During her long and most trying sickness, four soldiers, urged by a rage which it would seem was inspired by the foul fiend, entered the chamber of the afflicted maiden, and began to insult her with injurious words and shameful reproaches. Not content with this, they struck her, heaping blow upon blow, with the most barbarous cruelty. In the midst of this dire infliction, the poor sick girl was like a tender lamb in the clutches of a wolf, bearing with a calm countenance the insults and blows of these savages; and not only did she not seek to be avenged of such outrages, but she did her best to hinder those who would have invoked the vengeance of the law. Now, let the reader fix his attention on St. Lidwina, and he will discern two distinct models—one of heroic patience, the other of a no less heroic meekness. If he consider her calmness, contentment, and resignation to God's will, amid the sufferings she had to endure for so many weary years, he will seem to himself as if he were gazing at a picture of the patient Job. If he look at her while suffering the reproaches, insults, and scorn, which she bore so imperturbably without the slightest emotion of anger, he will think that he has before him an image of the meek David, so calm amid persecution, insults and outrage. He will be perplexed to decide which of these two virtues he should most admire in the saintly woman; because pain pierces the bodily frame, but insults penetrate to the very heart, and provoke it to anger and revenge, whence it needs greater self-control to keep calm and unmoved under the upheavings of indignation. Now, it is of this meekness, which so charms us in the saints, that we are going to treat in the following Chapters, for it has been proved to be a

* Surius. Vita S. Liduinæ.

virtue distinct from patience, of which we have already discoursed.

446. But, not to confound one virtue with another, it must be observed that meekness is akin to clemency, and yet somewhat different from it. It resembles clemency, inasmuch as both aim at keeping anger in check; it differs from it, in so far as clemency properly belongs to those only who bear rule and are set over others, and its function is to moderate anger so as to mitigate the punishment due to malefactors; while meekness befits every class and station, and has for its appropriate task to moderate anger in every one, lest it fall into excess. Such is the view of St. Thomas.* In a word, clemency is truly meekness, but proper only to princes, and those who are invested with authority over subjects.

447. I will now call the reader's attention to two famous examples of this latter virtue, given by the two illustrious Emperors Constantine and Theodosius, both of whom rightly received the surname of Great.† There were rebellious subjects, whose audacity went so far as to lead them to shamefully insult the statue of the great Constantine, and then out of scorn to throw it to the ground. The pious prince was in nowise moved at this outrage; not so his courtiers, who, unable to suffer that such an affront should remain unpunished, exaggerated its grievousness to the Emperor and urged him to avenge, by an exemplary punishment, the outrage done to his imperial person. On hearing this, Constantine raised his hand twice or thrice to his face, and said, with a smile, "I do not feel any wound,"‡—as if he would say that the violence and insult done to his statue had made no impression on his heart, wherein clemency kept watch and ward over the emotions of resentment.

* Clementia est lenitas superioris ad inferiorem, mansuetudo autem non solum est superioris ad inferiorem, sed cujuslibet ad quodlibet. Mansuetudo in quantum refrænat impetum iræ, concurrit in eumdem effectum cum clementiâ. Differunt tamen ab invicem, in quantum clementia est moderativa exterioris punitionis, mansuetudo autem proprie minuit passionem iræ. 2, 2, q. 157, art. 1.

† P. Ribaden., De Princ. Christ., lib. ii. cap. 18.

‡ Ego nullum vulnus sentio.

448. A prefect appointed by Theodosius the Great was, as St. John Chrysostom relates, murdered by the people of Antioch for some trivial reasons. Many of the accomplices in the crime had taken to flight, numbers were lodged in prison, and the whole city, in fear and trembling, awaited the thunderbolt of imperial vengeance. The Bishop Flavian went to cast himself at the emperor's feet, to implore his clemency for his rebellious flock, and soon obtained a general amnesty. The holy Doctor concludes that, by this deed, the emperor acquired the glory of being a prince no less brave and magnanimous than clement and gracious.* But this illustrious monarch deserves still greater praise for the law he published, withdrawing from the jurisdiction of the secondary courts the crime of such as outraged his name by insolent or contumacious words. The law alleges the following reasons for this:—"If such expressions proceed from thoughtlessness, no account is to be made of them; if from insanity, they claim compassion; if from an irritated heart, they should be forgiven."† Lastly, the law concludes with an order that all such causes be brought before the emperor in person, to be judged by his own most clement heart. We will now proceed to show how much this clemency, which is in private persons called meekness, befits a man possessed of reason, a Christian man, and still more a spiritual man.

CHAPTER II.

HE THAT IS NOT MEEK IS NOT A REASONABLE MAN.

449. By a reasonable man, a rational being, I do not understand merely one endowed with reason, for this belongs even to the insane, though their free-will be clogged and hindered in its action;

* Et principis non minus pii, et clementis, quam fortis, et magnanimi gloriam consecutus est. Homil. 2 ad Popul. Antioch.

† Quoniam si id ex levitate processit, contemnendum est; si ex insaniâ, miseratione dignissimum; si ab injuriâ, remittendum. Cod. Theod., lib. ix., tit. 4, L. Si quis Imperat.

this belongs even to persons overpowered by strong drink, and to such as are asleep, though their mental powers be enchained by slumber. Every wise man should be ashamed of the title in this remote and restricted sense. By a reasonable man, I mean one who is capable of making use of the reason wherewith he is naturally gifted; and they certainly can lay no claim to this designation, who, allowing themselves to be transported by anger, are wholly devoid of the quality of meekness, and whose passions degrade them to the level of the brutes.

450. Two things distinguish man from the brute. The first is reason, which we take as the rule of our actions—instead of instinct, or natural inclination, which is the guide of the brutes—since we act by the choice of our free-will. This distinction is of the essence of our rational nature. The other thing that distinguishes us from the beasts is the outward conformation of our limbs and organs; which, though it does not appertain to the essence of our being, is connected with its dignity, and hinders us who are men from being likened to the brute creation. Now, we are robbed of these two prerogatives by anger and wrath, whence it is not to be wondered at that they render us like unto animals. As far as concerns reason, says the Angelic Doctor, amongst all the passions which run riot in our hearts, none impede reason so much as anger; and he even goes so far as to compare an angry man to one who is drunk or asleep, in whom reason is wholly enchained by the fumes of wine or the unconsciousness of slumber.*

451. But attend to the proof which the holy Doctor alleges, to establish his position. He says that reason, in order to its operations (as long as this mortal life lasts), needs the sensitive powers of the body as instruments of its workings. Now, if these powers are troubled and disordered by a commotion of the humours,

* Dicendum quod mens, vel ratio, quamvis non utatur organo corporali in suo proprio actu; tamen quia indiget ad sui actum quibusdam viribus sensitivis, quorum actus impediuntur, corpore perturbato, necesse est quod perturbationes corporales etiam judicium rationis impediant, sicut patet in ebrietate, et somno. Dictum est autem, quod ira maxime facit perturbationem corporalem circa cor, ita ut etiam usque ad exteriora membra derivetur. Unde ira inter ceteras passiones manifestius impedit judicium rationis. 1, 2, q. 48, a. 3.

reason is prevented from employing them—they become unsuitable instruments. Let us take the sense of sight as an instance. If the eyes be regularly formed and provided with the necessary apparatus of vision, the soul can discern visible objects by their medium; but if the humours be altered by an inflammation, if the symmetry of the subordinate parts be disarranged, a man will no longer be able to perceive even the objects which are just before him. Just so, if a passion overcast and darken the organs of the mind, reason will either be unable to perform its appropriate acts or will perform them very imperfectly. Now, continues the Angelic Doctor, among the passions, anger is the most turbulent, in that it inflames the blood in the neighbourhood of the heart, spreads its heat throughout the body, stirs up the humours, sets all the spirits in motion, so that the brain is greatly disordered by this heat and disturbance, and its powers become confused; whence reason cannot perform its acts by the instrumentality of the brain or, if it does, it can exercise them only in a very incomplete manner. St. Thomas, therefore, most truly infers that anger evidently impedes the use of reason.* But if a man, beside himself with wrath, is actually deprived of reason, what is there to which he can be likened, unless indeed to the brute? For, like the brute, he no longer acts under the guidance of reason, but by the transports of passion.

452. But you may object: at least he is distinguished from the brute by the outward conformation of his frame and the use of his senses. No, reply the Holy Fathers; even in this he is no longer like a man, but resembles a brute beast. As regards speech, anger, says St. Thomas, not only hinders the exercise of thought, but paralyses the tongue, so that a man may be able to roar, howl, and yell like a brute, but at the same time be unable to speak.† As regards the distortion and disfigurement of the countenance and outward bearing, St. Gregory gives a description no less exact than minute. "Look at a man transported by anger! His heart beats violently, his whole body is in a tremor, his face is flushed;

* Ira inter ceteras passiones manifestius impedit judicium rationis.

† Potest esse tanta perturbatio iræ, quod omnino impediatur lingua ab usu loquendi; et tunc sequitur taciturnitas. 1, 2, q. 48, art. 4.

his eyes sparkle, he sees not; if he looks, he cannot recognise those best known to him; his tongue is powerless, confused, and utters the cries of a beast rather than the words of a man, so that he himself knows nothing of what he is saying. Good God!" he concludes, "wherein is such a one different from a demoniac, who has lost both reason and sense?"*

453. Nor is St. John Chrysostom less truthful or less vivid in the description which he gives of a passionate man. "You will see that a man in a transport of rage runs in hot haste, like one insane: you will see him dart fiery glances on every side; his countenance swells; his hands move disorderly; he stamps in a ridiculous manner with his feet, and rushes like a lunatic on those who strive to hold him back or to pacify him."† Whence we may draw the following inference with a moral Philosopher:—"What must be the interior of the wretched man whose outward appearance is thus so shamefully distorted? If he have thus lost all likeness to man in his exterior, think you that he can still retain in his interior the reason and the nature belonging to man?"‡

454. Galen tells us of himself,§ that, while yet a very young child, he chanced to see a man who, approaching the entrance of a house, tried to open it in great haste but, because the key would not act and all his efforts and contrivances availed him nothing, he got into such a rage that his face was all on fire: he gnashed his teeth and stamped on the ground. Then, as if the door was guilty of standing in his way, he began to kick it like a madman, and next venting his fury on the key, he was seen to gnaw at it

* Iræ suæ stimulis accensum cor palpitat, corpus tremit, lingua se præpedit, facies ignescit, exasperantur oculi, et nequaquam recognoscuntur noti. Ore quidem clamorem format; sed sensus quid loquatur, ignorat. In quo itaque iste ab abreptitiis longe est, qui actionis suæ conscius non est? Moral., lib. v., cap. 30.

† Videbis iratos, non secus ac insanos, turpiter in medium præcipites ferri. Cum enim circa præcordia efferbuit ira, ignem emittit; tota inflatur facies; incomposite manus moventur; ridicule prosiliunt pedes; rixam dirimere conantibus insultant; et in eos nullâ ab insanientibus differentiâ irruunt. Hom. 3 in Joan.

‡ Qualem putas esse animum, cujus externa imago tam fœda est. Seneca, Lib. de Irâ, cap. 35.

§ Lib. de Cognosc. et Cur. Animi Morbis.

like a dog. Nor did his madness stop even here; for, lifting up his darkened eyes to heaven, and with ferocious contortions of his lips, he commenced uttering horrible blasphemies against God, foaming at the mouth like a lion, and bellowing like a bull. The illustrious physician says that, child as he was, he was horror-struck at this sight, for he seemed to be looking upon a wild beast, despoiled of all reason and sense of humanity, rather than upon a man; and the sight inspired him with such an abhorrence of anger, that no one ever saw him angry throughout the whole course of his life.

455. But, if it be true that anger impedes in man the exercise of reason, and at times even wholly paralyses it—thus changing him from the rational animal, which he is, into an irrational, savage brute—who does not see the need we stand in, of acquiring the virtue of meekness, to which it belongs to bridle the mad passion of anger, to tone down pride, to maintain reason in the unshackled and complete exercise of its powers of well-doing, and thus to preserve for our exterior and outer senses the order and decency which becomes us? Granted, you will say; but it is too arduous a task to keep this impetuous passion within bounds, for like a high-mettled colt, it shakes off the yoke of reason before we are aware, and violently transports it to vengeance. "What!" replies St. John Chrysostom, in amazement, "we are able to tame the very lions, and yet we cannot tame the ferocity of our own souls! Savage as brutes are by nature, they may by art be rendered gentle, despite their natural bent; and we, who by nature are gentle, would be fierce and savage against the bent of our nature! We are able to take away from the brutes what is proper to their nature, and to implant within them that which is contrary to it, and yet we would declare our inability to preserve within us that gentleness with which the very nature of man has been endowed."*

* Quid dicis, homo? Leonibus imperamus, et animos eorum mansuetos facimus: et dubitas, num mentis ferociam in mansuetudine mutare possis; quamvis naturâ bestiæ feroces sint, et præter naturam mansuetæ: contra tu, præter naturam ferox, naturâ autem mitis? et qui bestiis id quod natura eis inest auferre, et quod eorum naturæ adversum inserere potes: id quod natura tibi præstitit, servare non potes? Hom. 9 in cap. 1 Genes.

What is here implied is, that if, by art and perseverance, we can tame wild beasts, we are far more able, by watchfulness and mortification, to render our own hearts meek and gentle.

CHAPTER III.

THAT HE WHO HAS NOT THIS VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS IS NOT A CHRISTIAN.

456. If any one place all the glory of the Christian name in holy baptism alone, whereby we are admitted into the bosom of the Church, it will be useless for him to read the present Chapter; because, although he check not his angry passions until he have become more ferocious than a tiger, he will surely not cease to be a Christian in this sense. But it must be remembered that this boast can be made by the most wicked and depraved Christian, and even the most hardened and unbelieving heretic—not to mention numbers of those miserable lost souls now wailing in the bottomless pit—for in truth, the character graven on the soul by this holy sacrament is so ineffaceable that it cannot be blotted out even by the stain of the blackest crimes.

457. By a Christian, I mean what so glorious a name truly implies—that is, a follower and imitator of Jesus Christ, especially in those virtues which He so much prized. But who does not know that meekness was the favourite virtue of our Blessed Saviour Who, when he was reviled, did not revile—when smitten, threatened not, but gave Himself up to him that condemned Him unjustly; as the Prince of the Apostles teaches us?* Isaias, foreseeing with his prophetic eye this meekness of our dearest Lord, could find no figure so suited to express it as that of an innocent lamb, which opens not its mouth before the shearer, but remains silent and mute and, without complaining, allows itself

* Cum enim malediceretur, non maledicebat; cum pateretur, non comminabatur: tradebat enim judicanti se injuste. I. Pet. ij. 23.

to be stripped of its soft wool. Thus, as the Prophet foretold, did Christ, like a gentle lamb, bend His back to the scourge, bow His head to the thorny wreath, give His hands and feet to be pierced with nails, and, without a sigh or a word of complaint, suffer His executioners to tear the flesh off His back with the most atrocious cruelty.*

458. Hence the Apostle, wishing to mention the peculiar and characteristic virtue of our Blessed Lord, mentions not His poverty or His obedience, or His humility, charity and zeal, or any other of the eminent virtues wherewith He was adorned, but speaks only of His meekness, and by this does he conjure the Corinthians, saying: *I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.*† In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he tells them, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, and all malice. And be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.*‡ St. John Chrysostom makes the following very suitable observation on these words:—"St. Paul," he writes, "exhorts us to meekness, not by the example of Angels or Archangels,—though naturally so gentle,—but by that of the God-Man, that, stimulated by the honour of being likened to the King of Glory, we might take courage to check the hot impulses of anger, and to receive with gentleness and calm of soul contumely, wrongs, affronts, at the hands of our enemies who hate, or of our friends who have been rude to, us."§ And further on, he adds, that "though a Christian should be furnished with every virtue, he must be especially endowed with meekness, for it is those only

* Quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum. Isai. liij. 7.

† Obsecro vos per mansuetudinem, et modestiam Christi. II. ad Cor. x. 1.

‡ Omnis amaritudo, et ira, et indignatio, et clamor, et blasphemia tollatur a vobis cum omni malitiâ. Estote autem invicem benigni, misericordes, donantes invicem, sicut et Deus in Christo donavit vobis. Ad Ephes. iv. 31-2.

§ Videtis qualis sit mansuetus? cujus vocetur imitator? non angelorum, non archangelorum, sed Domini universorum, ta netsi etiam illi mitissimi sint, virtuteque omni pleni. Paulus tamen Dei imitatores nos esse vult, quo propositâ tanti honoris magnitudine persuadeat audientibus, ut omnes qui contumeliâ afficiuntur, vel aliud quiddam grave patiuntur, convicia, atque alia moderate ferant, imperantesque iræ. Deum imitentur. Serm. de Mansuet.

that are adorned with this virtue whom Christ calls His imitators." He concludes: "Should, then, any one outrage us, strike us, or inflict any other injury upon us, let us bear all in peace, setting at once before our eyes the great maxim that meekness is the virtue which makes us imitators of our God."*

459. So much the more, as Jesus Christ requires this imitation of us, and claims and commands it with His own lips. "Learn not of Me," He says, "to work wonders—to give sight to the blind, to restore the use of their limbs to the halt and lame, to heal the sick, to raise the dead to life. All these things, I know full well, are beyond your strength. But learn of Me to be meek and gentle. What I require of you is the heart of a dove, free from gall, wrath, and rancour—a heart like unto Mine. I require you to have a heart that loves every one."† And what heart so hard, so cruel, so brutal, as not to become calm, mild, and under control, at the words and example of Christ? What heart so insensible that, beholding the Redeemer unmoved, calm, and silent amid countless insults, mockeries, outrages, most disgraceful ignominies, and knowing His desire that we should take pattern by this meekness of His, would not lay aside all anger, and recover a placid serenity? They tell of the elephant, that if in a fit of fury he meet with a flock of sheep, the sight of these gentle creatures pacifies him, and makes him gentle too. How much more, then, should not the sight of that most meek Lamb, Jesus Christ, avail, when set before our minds, to extinguish our anger, to appease our hearts, and incline them to forgiveness?

460. In the early ages of the Church, a Christian, walking along the streets of Alexandria, fell in with a mob of idolaters, who, recognising him for a follower of Christ, began to ill-treat him in every imaginable way. Some hustled him, others kicked him, others insulted him with abusive words. He, meanwhile, as firm as a rock, which pays no attention to the fury of the winds, showed

* Et multæ quidem sunt virtutes, quæ Christianum virum decent, maxime tamen omnium mansuetudo. Nam eos solos, qui hâc conspicui sunt, Dei imitatores Christus nominat. Proinde congruum est, ut quando quis contumeliâ nos afficit, vel verberat, vel aliâ ratione affligit, sustineamus omnia mansuete et patienter, considerantes quod Dei imitatores milites fecit.

† Discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde. Matth. xj. 29.

no emotion amid so many shameful outrages. Then these barbarians, in order to pierce him to the quick, began to mock at the holy faith, saying, "What wonders, what prodigies, have ever been wrought by that Christ of yours with whom you are so infatuated?" The good man, who, until then, had not shown resentment at the injuries done to himself, could no longer keep silence when hearing his Saviour spoken ill of, and replied: "Do you account it, then, a small miracle that I remain thus unmoved by your outrages, that I show no emotion, that the desire of revenge is not kindled in me?"—meaning by this, that not to resent injuries is the distinctive character of the Christian, and the plainest proof of the power of that God Whose disciple he is, which enables him, amid so many violent onslaughts, to keep the citadel of his heart firm and unshaken.

461. Hence, whenever, on occasion of something chancing which is disagreeable and opposed to our wishes, the flames of anger and rage shall be kindled within us, let us call to mind our Saviour's meekness, setting Him before our minds as He was amid the insults of His enemies, and we shall not fail soon to feel a change come over our heart, and to become meek and gentle; for, in truth, it is from the forgetfulness in which we live of the examples set by Christ, that the fuming of our angry passions and the resentment of our hearts take their rise.* Blosius relates that our Saviour, one day, rebuking St. Bridget for I know not what act of impatience and ill-temper which she had allowed to disturb her, confined Himself to a reproach for the forgetfulness of His divine example, which she had permitted herself during that time of temptation—"I, thy Maker, and thy Spouse," said Christ to her, "did for thy sake bear stripes and blows; yet mere words were more than thou couldst bear for My sake. At the judgment-seat I was silent, nor opened I My mouth, while thou, replying and scolding with harshness, hast raised thy voice beyond measure. In a word, thou shouldst bear everything patiently for My sake, Who for thy sake was nailed to the Cross, and by gentleness and patience, not by harsh rebukes, seek the amend-

* Idcirco, cum tibi grave aliquid, et durum ferenti subrepunt furor, et ira, recordare mansuetudinis Christi, et statim mansuetus eris, et clemens.

ment of him that has gone astray."* Thus did our Lord admonish this saintly woman, and, in her, all of us; teaching that our guilty transports in time of trouble arise from not having present to our minds the examples which He has set us of true meekness.

462. I will then conclude in the very words of Christ Himself: *Blessed are the meek*—they who know how to calm the upheavings of passion—*for they shall possess the land.*† Should you ask what is this land that the meek thus conquer, and where they find true bliss, St. Basil will answer that it is the land promised us in the Jerusalem that is above—promised to us by our Redeemer in the passage just now cited; a land which is not given as the booty of him that fights in war, but as a heritage to him who, following in the footprints of his Divine Saviour, like Him suffers injuries, affronts, outrages, in peace, with gentleness and long-suffering.‡ This is why the holy Doctor styles meekness the greatest of the virtues.§

CHAPTER IV.

THAT HE WHO IS DEVOID OF MEEKNESS CAN MUCH LESS BE CALLED A SPIRITUAL MAN.

463. Were it possible for any one to be a spiritual man without the spirit of prayer, it would also be possible for him to become

* Ego creator, et sponsus tuus pro te sustinui verbera, tu vero ita impatiens fuisti, ut portare non potueris verba. Ego stans ante judicem tacui, et non aperui os meum; sed tu acerbius respondendo et exprobrando, vocem tuam nimis exaltâsti. Tu debueras omnia patienter tolerare pro me, qui clavis affixus fui pro te: debueras per patientiam tuam eum qui erravit, ad meliora provocare. Monit. Spirit., cap. 4.

† Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram. Matth. v. 4.

‡ Maxima omnium virtutum mansuetudo, eaque in beatitudinum numerum relata est. *Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram:* illa enim terra cœlestis Hierusalem non est bellatorum spolium; sed longanimiter, et mansuete omnia tolerantium, sperata hæreditas. In Psalm. xxxiij.

§ Maxima omnium virtutum mansuetudo.

spiritual without meekness. Who does not know that in order to hold communion with God in prayer, calm of mind and peace of heart are requisite? For that pure light which God vouchsafes to those who deal familiarly with Him, cannot penetrate into a troubled mind, nor can the tranquil inspirations of His grace find their way into a heart agitated and upset by the conflict of angry passions. For what passion so overcasts the understanding and shrouds it in palpable darkness as wrath and anger, since the Apostle whom we have above quoted expressly teaches that it goes so far as to trouble and confuse reason itself? Which of our appetites raises such a commotion within our breasts as anger, since it even makes our hearts palpitate within us. What conversation, then, can he expect to hold with God, what regularity can be looked for in the practice of virtue from one, who, being devoid of meekness, is the slave of such turbulent and impetuous passions.

464. St. Gregory observes that anger, by its excitement, causes the divine light to vanish, and consequently drives out the spirit of prayer, which draws all its vigour from this light of heaven.* Suppose the atmosphere to be agitated by a thunderstorm and by violent blasts, and to be overcast on all sides by dark clouds, think how you would fare, were you to go forth to behold the beauteous face of the sun; or were it night, if you tried to contemplate the beauty of the stars, how you would be unable, since the brightness of those shining orbs would be hid behind the dense veil of the darksome clouds. In like manner, give frequent scope to your angry passions which stir up your bile within you, and try to contemplate heavenly things, you certainly will not succeed; for the divine light will be overcast by this turbid commotion, and the mind will remain confused and in darkness.†

* Per iram lux veritatis amittitur, sicut scriptum est: *Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram:* quia tunc menti iracundia confusionis tenebras incutit, huic Deus radium suæ cognitionis abscondit. Per iram Spiritûs Sancti splendor excluditur: quo contra, juxta vetustam translationem, scriptum est: *Super quem requiescet spiritus meus, nisi super humilem, et quietum, et trementem sermones meos.* Moral., lib. v. cap. 30.

† Ira in sinu stulti requiescit, quia nimirum intelligentiæ lucem subtrahit, cum mentem permovendo confundit. Ibid.

465. To be brief, nothing is so essential for him who would apply to prayer and, by its means, advance in perfection, as that the heaven of his mind shall be ever calm, unclouded and serene; and as no passion so disturbs this calm as wrath and anger, so, according to the observation of St. John Chrysostom, there is no virtue which avails so much as meekness to prevent its being disturbed.* And he adds a very good reason for this: "It will be of little advantage to you, to have acquired a certain outward peace by means of other virtues which remove every occasion of disquiet and disturbance, if you harbour within you the storms, agitations, and uprisings of angry thoughts; just as it avails a city but little to be well provided with fortifications and well garrisoned, if there remain within it domestic traitors filling the streets with their intestine conflicts. For notwithstanding its being well protected from the foes without, it will be far worse off than any badly fortified city.† Wherefore, to preserve calm of mind and peace of heart, it does not suffice to flee the world, to hide in solitude, to bury one's self in grottoes and darksome caves, to ward off all intercourse and every occasion that may provoke to anger; for, notwithstanding all this, unless meekness abide in the heart, to allay the inner tumult of vengeful passion, we shall, even amid trees and woods, in forests, and in the wilds, be agitated by disturbing thoughts of anger." And so the Saint might well say that we stand in need of meekness to keep the soul calm and in peace, and consequently disposed for prayer and for receiving the influences of divine grace.‡

466. We read in Holy Writ of an event which illustrates and establishes the truth of our statement.§ Joram, the wicked king of Israel, being vehemently incensed against Mesa the king of Moab, who refused the annual tribute of one hundred thousand

* Nihil animum ita in tranquillitate et quiete esse facit, quam mansuetudo et modestia. Homil. 34 in Genes. 13.

† Nam quamvis plurimâ pace, et curâ externâ fruamur, si intra nos cogitationum nascatur tempestas, tumultus, seditio; nihil externa pax nobis proderit: sicut et neque miserabilius est aliquod civitate, quæ licet præsidiis et muris bene sit munita, intus tamen cives foveat proditores.

‡ Nihil animam ita in tranquillitate, et quiete esse facit, ut mansuetudo.

§ IV. Reg. iij.

lambs, and as many rams, which he had bound himself by treaty with his father Achab to pay, determined to right himself by force of arms. He called to his help Josaphat, the pious king of Judah, and the king of Edom; and all three banded together at the head of three formidable armies, and went to attack the Moabitish king. But God, in punishment of the unbelief of the king of Israel, allowed them, instead of directing their march through a land abounding with supplies, to go by the desert of Idumea to the encounter of their common enemy. Finding themselves in a sandy waste, far from rivers, fountains, and brooks, both men and cattle began to be parched with thirst; and as the march had lasted full a week they were all, at length, in danger of perishing with thirst and of being buried in the sands of that desert wilderness. Then Joram became aware of the judgment of God, and broke out into bitter lamentations.* But Josaphat, as behoved so godly a prince, seeing that these outbursts of sorrows availed nothing, and that recourse must be had to God in so great a peril, said: "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" The answer was given him, that Eliseus was there—the servant of the great Prophet Elias. And Josaphat said: *The word of the Lord is with him.* And as in times of urgent need, kings lay aside their pomp and circumstance, and humble their majesty, the three allied monarchs went down to the Prophet in person. As soon as he saw king Joram, Eliseus, burning with a holy indignation, said: "*What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and mother*, miscreant worshippers of idols, even as thyself."† Joram resented not so cutting a rebuke, for he was downcast by the calamity that had befallen him, but explained the danger which threatened the whole army. Then Eliseus, more than ever irritated by the idolatrous king, replied: *As the Lord of hosts liveth, before Whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Josaphat the king of Judah, I would not have hearkened to thee*

* Heu, heu, heu, congregavit nos Deus tres reges, ut traderet in manus Moab.

† Quid mihi, et tibi est? vade ad prophetas patris tui, et matris tuæ.

*nor looked on thee.** He then turned to God to implore His aid for the thirsting army. But being angered and irritated against the king of Israel, he felt himself indisposed to receive the inspiration of the spirit of God; so he said: *Now bring me a minstrel:* intending to appease, by the softness of the music, the upheavings of zeal which agitated him, and thus to prepare himself to receive of God some communication suitable to the present need.† And so it came to pass, for scarce had the sweetness of the melody restored the soul of Eliseus to its wonted calm, when the spirit of the Lord came suddenly upon him, and he cried out: *Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. Ye shall not see wind, nor shall ye see rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.* And so it came to pass the next morning.

467. I observe on this, that if a commotion and agitation of soul arising from godly zeal for the divine honour, despised and set at naught by this unbelieving king, was for the Prophet a hindrance to the illumination of the Divine Spirit and to conversation with God, do you imagine that the anger, the indignation, the peevishness, in which some persons, wholly devoid of meekness, indulge so frequently, not out of zeal for God's honour, but from a petty jealousy for their own, which they fancy to have been wounded by some word or action,—do you imagine, I ask, that this can be anything but a serious obstacle to that light from on high, to those impulses of divine grace on which depend the good results of a devout prayer? St. Gregory says that there is "an anger arising from impatience, and an anger which springs from a holy zeal for justice; the former is begotten of vice, the latter is the offspring of virtue."‡ Now, if the anger that pro-

* Vivit Dominus exercituum, in cujus conspectu sto, quod si non vultum regis Josaphat regis Judæ erubescerem, non attendissem quidem te, nec respexissem.

† Jussit Elisæus psaltem psallere: ut sono suavi, et harmoniâ musices, animum nonnihil indignatione in regem Israel commotum colligeret, sedaret, eumque in Deum orando sustolleret, et ad recipiendum a Deo prophetiam disponeret.

‡ Alia est ira, quam impatientia excitat, alia quam zelus justitiæ format Illa ex vitio, haec ex virtute generatur. Moral., lib. v. cap. 30.

ceeds from virtue hinders our communication with God, how should not that which is the offspring of vice be an obstacle thereunto?

468. Whatever others may think, I hold it to be impossible: knowing as I do what St. Gregory says, that the contemplation of the things of God cannot exist in a soul that is agitated, since a troubled mind cannot behold those supernatural objects which our mind, even when calm, can scarcely contemplate.* In proof of this truth, you will discover that those saints who have risen to the highest degree of prayer have always been the most meek. Who was ever admitted into such close familiarity with God in prayer as Moses? It will be enough if I say that God Himself bore public witness to His having spoken with Moses mouth to mouth, openly, and not by dark speeches, or similitudes, as He spoke with the other Prophets.† But on the same authority we learn, that *Moses was very meek above all men who were upon the face of the earth.*‡ And next to Moses, who was raised in prayer to a loftier and purer contemplation than David? For in contrast with the other Prophets to whom God usually revealed hidden truths under emblems and images, he was admitted to see them in themselves by the most sublime intellectual visions. So singular was his gentleness, that the Scripture could say of him: *Remember, O Lord, David, and all his meekness.*§ The word *all* expressing how deeply rooted, how flourishing was this virtue in the heart of the holy king. The same may be said of Abraham, with whom it pleased God so frequently to converse. He was a most meek-tempered man, as appeared when, to avoid every occasion of strife, he gave his nephew Lot the choice of the more fertile and pleasant region which belonged to him in right of his being the first-born. The same holds good of all the saints of the New Law: the closer, the more intimate their converse with

* Numquam commotioni contemplatio conjungitur, nec prævalet mens perturbata conspicere, ad quod vix tranquilla valet inhiare. Ut supra.

† Ore enim ad os loquor ei; et palam, et non per ænigmata, et per figuras Dominum videt. Num. xij. 8.

‡ Erat Moyses vir mitissimus super omnes homines, qui morabantur in terrâ. Ibid. xij. 3.

§ Memento, Domine, David, et omnis mansuetudinis ejus. Ps. cxxxi. 1.

God, the more meek-hearted and peaceable they were. If then, the spirit of prayer cannot be had without the spirit of meekness, he who is devoid of this virtue cannot hope to become a devout and spiritual man.

CHAPTER V.

MEEKNESS SERVES NOT ONLY TO KEEP UNDER OUR OWN ANGER, BUT ALSO TO DIMINISH THE ANGER OF THOSE WHO ATTACK US.

469. We have hitherto seen how much it belongs first to the Christian, and then to the spiritual man, to curb anger and every appetite of revenge by the virtue of meekness. My purpose now is to show how nothing so quenches anger and hate in our enemies, as when their acts of hostility are met with the practice of this virtue; and how it is quite obvious that by meekness alone we can succeed in establishing a stable and genuine peace within our hearts.

470. Fire is not extinguished by another fire, but by water; thus too the fire of anger which urges an enemy to affront us, is not to be put out by the anger with which we go forth to encounter him, but with the water of meekness: as St. John Chrysostom remarks.* A cannon ball, borne on the wings of fire, crushes rocks, overthrows strong towers, breaks and shivers into countless fragments every hard body it meets with in its path; but if it strikes against a wool-pack, the softness of the material stays at once its speed and violence. In like manner, if the rage and fury of an enemy, who comes to assail us with words of reproach, or deeds of violence, meet with the softness of meekness in our heart and with gentleness in our reply, it will soon give way, cool down, and lose all power to hurt us, as the Holy Ghost

* Non potest igne ignis extingui, repugnat enim hoc naturæ; sic nec furor furore alio demulceri poterit unquam. Verum quod igni est aqua, hoc est iræ mansuetudo, et mititas. Hom. 58, in Genes.

Himself assures, saying: *A mild answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.**

471. Let us see how true this is by the example of the patriarch Jacob. He beheld his brother Esau marching against him, thirsting for vengeance, at the head of four hundred armed men. Terrified at this sight, he stationed all his household in a concerted order, putting in the front, and exposing to the first fury of his brother's wrath, those who were less dear to him; but keeping close to his own person those whom he most tenderly loved. So he put the handmaids and their children foremost; Lia and her children came after them; and Rachel and Joseph, his especial favourites, were last of all. Having thus arranged his family, he betook himself to the weapons which were the most likely to avail against his brother's fury and to overcome his attack. What, think you, were they? Spears, swords, breast-plates, bucklers, javelins, arrows, and the like? None of these. To overcome his brother's anger he employed no other arms than an extreme meekness, joined to a most lowly submission. So that, when he came near to Esau, he bowed himself to the ground and humbly worshipped him. After repeating this homage seven times he followed up his attack on the infuriated hate of his brother with the lowly and peaceful weapons of meekness.† He summoned his household to take their turn in the onslaught, in the order in which he had placed them; each, one after the other, drew near, and each one bowed himself to the ground.‡ You are curious to know the result of this mode of combat, so foreign to the usages of earthly warfare. It was this: Esau, at the sight of such gentleness, ran to embrace his brother Jacob; but this was little, he tenderly clasped him to his bosom, lovingly kissed him, and wept for tenderness. This, too, was not all. "Let us go together," said Esau; "these armed

* Responsio mollis frangit iram. Prov. xv. 1.

† Et ipse progrediens adoravit pronus in terram septies, donec appropinquaret frater ejus. Gen. xxxiij. 3.

‡ Et appropinquantes ancillae, et filii earum incurvati sunt. Accessit quoque Lia cum pueris suis, et cum similiter adorâssent, extremi Joseph, et Rachel adoraverunt. Gen.

men whom you see will be your defenders, I your companion."* What a mighty weapon is meekness to appease anger, and to soften the hardness of an infuriated heart! "Learn hereby," says Cornelius a Lapide, commenting on this passage, "that the anger and pride of fierce men, however mighty they may be, cannot be tamed so surely by any other means, as by that of lowly submission.† Look at Esau, who a little before raged against his innocent brother like a lion; he is now gentle as a lamb, shedding tears of affection on the neck of this very same brother, being vanquished, not by force of arms, but by the arts of a lowly meekness. Learn hence how to overcome the spite of your own enemies when they shall assail you either with contumely or slander, or by any other means.

472. But St. John Chrysostom goes more deeply into this passage of Holy Writ. After relating the happy results which followed from the submissive, lowly, and affectionate dealing of Jacob with his enraged brother, he concludes as follows:—"It would seem that no virtue is more unwarlike than meekness, yet there is none possessing more force by the power it has to overcome every heart. For as water quenches fire, however fiercely it may riot in the furnace, so does a soft word extinguish wrath, even though it burn more fiercely in the breast of our enemy than the flames of a raging furnace. Hence, a two-fold advantage results from the practice of meekness; for we make the indignation of our brother to cease, and we free his heart from the anger on account of which it was in a state of disturbance."‡

473. Nor was St. John Chrysostom one of those preachers of whom Christ said:—*They teach but practise not:* for he showed

* Currens itaque Esau obviam fratri suo amplexatus est eum: stringensque collum ejus, et osculans, flevit. . . . Gradiamur simul, eroque socius itineris tui.

† Disce hinc, superbiam, et iram potentium, et ferocium, non aliâ re magis frangi, quam supplici submissione.

‡ Nihil enim mansuetudine violentius. Nam sicut rogum, cum valde accenditur, aqua injecta restinguit; ita et animum camino magis exardescentem, verbum cum mansuetudine prolatum extinguit. Et duplex inde nobis lucrum accrescit, tum quod nos mansuetudinem declaramus, tum quod fratris indignationem cessare facimus, et mentem ejus a turbatione liberamus. Hom. 58, in Genes.

forth in his own behaviour what he preached to the people from the pulpit. Sophronius relates* that a certain Bishop having taken offence against him and his clergy, Chrysostom went to meet him, accompanied by them. He fell at the Bishop's feet; at so noble an example, his clergy did likewise; then the Saint uttered these humble words:—"Pardon us, Reverend Sir, if we have offended you in anything; we are all of us your servants."† The Bishop was at first astonished at such an act; but then, being touched to the quick, he fell in his turn at the feet of the Saint, and with a flood of tears, said to him, "Henceforward you shall be my father and master."‡ On his return to his see, the Saint said to his clergy: "By God's grace, we have overcome our enemy. If you have any enemies, do likewise; and be sure that you will be the conquerors."§

474. The holy Doctor gives us the reasons why it behoves us thus to deal with those who have an aversion for us. There is, he says, no other means of restoring to our own hearts the peace which has been troubled by the malignity of others. If you are hurt at your neighbour's behaving spitefully towards you, he too feels hurt at your dealing angrily with him. If his enmity embitters your heart, yours has the same effect on his. If, then, you would reach the haven of peace and rest, take an opposite road: he treats you with anger, do you answer him gently; he meets you with ill-treatment, do you repay him with kindness; he wishes in his pride to rise above you, do you submit to him with lowly meekness. Search as long as you list, you will discover no other means to conciliate him, and to restore calm and peace to your own heart;‖ so much the more that to behave thus, is the highest eminence which the virtue of a Christian can attain. To deal mildly and affectionately with one who loves you is easy

* In Prat. Spirit., cap. 210.

† Ignosce, domine, nobis, servi tui sumus.

‡ Tu meus dominus, et pater es.

§ Numquid per Christi gratiam vicimus? et vos ergo cum habetis inimicum, ita facite, et victores eritis.

‖ Quid enim, dic mihi: Num reprehendis fratrem tuum, et accusas indignationem, quod hostiliter se gerit contra te? Cur igitur diversâ viâ non studes incedere; sed ipse magis irasceris? Non potest igne ignis extingui.

enough; as Christ says, *Even the heathen do this.** The heroism of Christian meekness consists in treating humbly and affectionately those who hate, outrage and persecute us, and in conciliating them by kindness and services. Thus far St. John Chrysostom.†

475. But this, you will say, is a degree of perfection not only high, but difficult of attainment and far above our puny strength. I answer, that with the help of God's grace and the persevering practice of virtue, we may attain to it. No tower so lofty but we may reach its summit by going up the steps that lead thereto. Do you begin by energetically repressing every angry emotion, availing yourself of the motive alleged above, and by degrees you will come to be calm and unmoved, even amid ill-treatment and insults; nay, to rejoice in them; and then it will be easy for you to keep a good heart towards him that offends you. This was the plan followed by the youth whose story Abbot John was wont to relate to his monks, to stimulate them to the perfection of meekness.‡ He placed himself under the tuition of an austere philosopher, who for three years forced upon him an abject and shameful employment, and then ordered him for another three years not only to put up with the abuse he might chance to receive, but to pay those who insulted him. The young man faithfully complied with his master's commands, and then the philosopher told him, "You are now fit for the study of wisdom; now you can accompany me to Athens." At the gate of this city, an old philosopher had taken up his post for the purpose of making trial of those who aspired to the study of wisdom, and his test was to abuse and insult them with injurious words. The youth, then, as he approached the city, was met by the old man, who forthwith let loose upon him a torrent of abuse and reproaches. Without showing the least emotion, the student

* Etiam ethnici hoc faciunt.

† Hoc vere summæ virtutis est, ut non solum eos qui bene nobis afficiuntur, magno studio diligamus, et eis omnibus modis serviamus; sed ut etiam eos qui nobis infesti esse volunt, assiduitate officiorum nobis conciliemus amicos. Cit. Homil.

‡ Vitæ Patrum. lib. v., n. 79, Edit. Colon.

began to smile good-humouredly, as if he had been honourably greeted, instead of receiving insult. Seeing so unusual a calm, the old man returned to the charge with another volley of opprobrious epithets. The youth only laughed more gaily and more unconcernedly. Amazed at this, the philosopher exclaimed: "How now! I abuse you, and yet you laugh!" The youth made answer: "For three whole years I have had to pay those who loaded me with such reproaches, but you do it for nothing. I have reason then to laugh." Great was his meekness, and yielding in no point to the more deep-seated and perfect gentleness recommended to us by the saints. But if this youth could rise to such a height for the sake of human wisdom, cannot we do as much for the love of divine wisdom and of our own perfection; out of love of a glorious bliss, and of Jesus Christ, to Whom meekness is so pleasing, so acceptable and so dear?

CHAPTER VI.

TWO REMEDIES PRESCRIBED BY ST. GREGORY TO CURB THE PASSION OF ANGER AND ACQUIRE THE VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS.

476. THE passion of anger may be weakened, says St. Gregory, in two ways. The first is that, before acting, we unfold to our mind's eye all the insults that may be showered upon us, to the end that considering what our dear Lord has been pleased to endure for love of us, we may dispose ourselves to put up with them for His sake.* We have indicated this consideration in the foregoing Article, as calculated to enable us to bear misfortune patiently; but, since St. Gregory repeatedly prescribes it as a preservative against several spiritual ailments, it is right that we should

* Duobus modis, fracta possidere animum ira desuevit: primus quippe est ut mens sollicita, antequam agere quodlibet incipiat, omnes sibi, quas pati potest contumelias, proponat: quatenus Redemptoris sui probra cogitans, ad adversa se præparet. Moral., lib. v., cap. 30.

frequently recommend it. The holy Doctor then says, that a Christian who is insulted, wronged, and thwarted, without his having forecast such mishaps, may be likened to a soldier asleep, whom the enemy may kill without risk, as he finds him defenceless and unable to make any stand. On the contrary, he who forecasts dishonour, provocation, insults, and all he may have to suffer from the malice of his fellows, is like a soldier on the watch against the enemy's approach who, sword in hand, is ever ready to fight and to put them to rout, and constantly disposed by his watchfulness to win a glorious victory. We should, therefore, says the Saint, always (once a day perhaps would suffice) foresee the contradictions that we may have to undergo from our neighbours, in order to ward off with the breast-plate of meekness all the darts that may come from without, and to hold in check the motions of anger which may be stirred up within.*

477. I just now observed, that it will be sufficient to do once a day, what the Saint would have us do almost at every turn, and this should be done at the time of morning prayer. We should then call to mind all the offensive words which by any chance may be addressed to us, all the annoyances we may have to undergo, the complaints that may be made, and whatever slights, insults, and provocations may fall to our lot. At the same time, we should—as St. Gregory teaches—set before our eyes our Redeemer, beyond compare more grievously offended by insults of the kind of which we are speaking; consider the extreme meekness and gentleness wherewith He bore all for our sake; and should thence take courage, offering ourselves from our hearts, for love of Him, to suffer the little that may befall us, without anger or resentment. With St. Basil may we say, "You will, perhaps, be overwhelmed with blows. They may even spit in your face, but your Saviour

* Qui enim improvidus ab adversitate deprehenditur, quasi ab hoste dormiens invenitur; eumque citius inimicus necat, quia non repugnantem perforat. Nam qui mala imminentia per sollicitudinem prænotat, hostiles incursus, quasi in insidiis vigilans, expectat; et inde ad victoriam valenter accingitur, unde nesciens deprehendi putabatur. Solers ergo animus ante actionis suæ primordia, cuncta debet adversa meditari, ut semper hæc cogitans, semper contra hæc thorace patientiæ munitus, et quidquid accesserit providus superet; et quidquid non accesserit, lucrum putet.

suffered this for you. Some slander will be laid to your charge, your fair fame will be blackened, but the honour of your Saviour was torn by the envenomed fangs of calumny. Your clothes may be torn off your back, ay, but so too were the clothes of your Saviour, and lots were cast for them. You may conjure up the greatest disgrace likely to be inflicted upon you, yet will you never be unjustly doomed to die and be nailed to a cross, as Christ was nailed for your sake. But if He submitted to such unspeakable ignominy for your good, can you not accept, with willing heart, some slight insult, for love of Him?"* A most effectual means is this of being forearmed against the offences which may be committed against us, and of keeping the soul in readiness to allay every movement of anger that such circumstances may stir up within us.

478. St. Chrysostom says, that to appease a heart, however full of anger it may be, it suffices to keep before our eyes the examples of meekness set us by holy David.† "Do not tell me," says the Saint, "that your enemy is a scoundrel, a perfidious wretch, and incorrigible to boot; for whatever you may lay to his charge, he cannot be worse than was Saul, whose life David had so often spared when it was in his power; yet this treacherous man never ceased to set fresh snares for the life of the guiltless and meek youth, and to respond to his benefits by repeated betrayals."‡ Now, if the example of forbearance set by a mere man like ourselves, and who never had to suffer such cruel wrongs, ought to suffice (as this great Doctor teaches) to quench the flames of anger, though kindled countless times within our breasts,

* Alapâ vel pugillo cæsus es? expuit aliquis in faciem? Eadem et Dominus est passus. Calumniam pateris? et Dominus. Tua laceratur vestis? et Domino extracta per vim est vestis, et super eam missæ sortes. Nondum condemnatus es: nondum cruci affixus. Homil. 10, De Ira.

† Si imaginem Davidis præ oculis habeas, et in hanc assidue figas oculos, etiamsi millies abundet ira, mentis oculos perturbans, ad hoc virtutis exemplum respiciens, perfectam consequeris sanitatem. Hom. de Davide et Saule.

‡ Ne quis igitur mihi dicat: inimicum habeo sceleratum, improbum, incorrigibilem. Quidquid dixerit, non est autem Saule deterior, qui semel, iterum, immo sæpius servatur a Davide, cum ipse mille modis illi struxisset insidias; tamen post tot beneficia accepta, perseveravit in suâ malitiâ.

what will not be the power of the example of the King of Heaven, of the Monarch of the Universe, Who bore with unspeakable meekness affronts far greater, and bore them for our sake? It is surely beyond doubt that meekness will have this power, provided only that we forecast the wrongs we may have to undergo, set them side by side with what Christ endured, and encourage ourselves to the imitation of his forbearance.

479. St. Gregory proceeds to set forth the second remedy which he prescribes for curbing anger and acquiring meekness. The second means of acquiring meekness under injury is, that on beholding the excesses of others against ourselves, we call to mind the shortcomings whereby we, in our turn, have transgressed at other times. For the consideration of our weakness will help us to excuse that of others. That man will bear injury without losing his peace of mind who remembers that he too needs to be borne with; and as water quenches fire, so the recollection of our own faults will extinguish the flames of anger and rage, when kindled in our heart; for we shall be ashamed not to pardon others their offences, if only we reflect that we have much on our conscience which needs pardon.*

480. The saintly Doctor means hereby, that the person who is offended, if alone he think of the many sins by which he has outraged the divine goodness, and the awful chastisements which he has deserved, will humble himself, and be convinced that he has merited the wrongs inflicted on him by his neighbour, and through this inward self-humbling, will keep down the ebullitions of the anger that are urging him on to resentment and vengeance. What criminal was there ever, who, doomed for his crimes to suffer death at the hands of the executioner on an infamous gibbet, would not gladly exchange this ignominy for the affront of

* Secundus autem conservandæ mansuetudinis modus est, ut cum alienos excessus aspicimus, nostra, quibus in alia excedimus, delicta cogitemus. Considerata quippe infirmitas propria, mala nobis excusat aliena. Patienter namque illatam injuriam tolerat qui pie meminit, quod fortasse adhuc habet, in quo debeat ipse tolerari. Et quasi aquâ ignis extinguitur, cum surgente furore animi, sua cuique ad mentem culpa revocatur, qui erubescit peccata non parcere, qui vel Deo, vel proximo sæpe se recolit parcenda peccasse. Moral. Ut supra.

a slap on the face from the hand of his enemy? And what Christian, who, on considering that for his sins he has merited everlasting death and endless torments at the hands of the infernal torturers, will refuse willingly to bear with an insulting word or deed, a malicious annoyance, or unjust grievance, at the hands of his enemy? "Not one," replies St. Bernard; "for from the knowledge of our iniquities and from repentance for them, not only does that meekness spring which can take no hurt from the venomous breath of the dragon, but a greatness of soul that is not daunted by the lion's roar.*

481. The story of St. Marina is well known; but because it is most suitable for the confirmation of the teaching of the two holy Doctors just quoted, I will briefly resume it.† This holy maiden was mistaken for a man, and having been admitted by certain monks into their monastery, took the habit and went by the name of Marinus. In course of time, she was falsely accused of having deflowered the daughter of one who had given her hospitality. The Abbot, on hearing such a serious charge, asked Marinus whether he was indeed guilty of so enormous a crime. Marinus was well aware that she neither was, nor could be, guilty of such an act; yet, calling to mind the other faults which she had committed in the course of her life, she would not justify herself, but replied thus to the Abbot: "I have sinned; I will do penance; do you, Father, pray for me." The Abbot boiled over with indignation; and after having had her severely beaten, expelled her the monastery, as unworthy to abide in the holy place she had brought to shame by her excesses. Now not even these extremities induced the pretended Marinus to make her innocence manifest; but, prostrate at the monastery gate, she begged of the monks, as they went in and out, pardon of her sins, and a morsel of bread to support life. After a while, the father of the seduced girl, taking in his arms the child of sin, carried it to Marinus, cast it into her lap, saying: "This is the

* Non modo oritur mansuetudo, cui draconis flatus non noceat, sed etiam magnanimitas, quam rugitus leonis non terreat. In Psal. "Qui habitat," Serm. 13.

† In Vitis Patrum. Part i.

fruit of your crime; it is your duty now to see to its support." She needed only to have revealed her sex to put her innocence beyond all doubt, to contradict the slander, to save herself from such confusion and to confound her calumniators. But no; without exculpating herself, she adopted the babe with indescribable gentleness, and began to nourish it with the little bread that was given her out of charity, as if it really were her own child; keeping ever before the eyes of the monks, and of all who entered the monastery, the tangible proof of a crime she had not committed. She continued thus to sit with the child, at the threshold, for five whole years, earning for herself the most stinging reproaches, and increasing her shame beyond measure. The Abbot, at length, moved to pity by so deserving a penitence, readmitted her; on condition, however, that she was daily to sweep and dust the monastery, carry water wherever it was needed, and wash the sandals of the monks. She bowed her head, and accepted everything in penance; not for her supposed sin, but for her other faults; and within a few days after, she died. On hearing the news of her death, the Abbot observed: "Was he not, in truth, a wicked and dissolute monk, since God has not allowed him length of days sufficient to complete his penance? He does not deserve to lie in the cemetery with the other monks; pay his remains the usual duty of washing them, and let him be buried without the sacred inclosure." The monks did as he commanded, and then it was that death made known the innocence of Marina, which she forebore to vindicate in her life time.

482. I can hardly believe that the annals of the Church contain an instance of more heroic meekness. The holy maid, ruined in her honour by so atrocious a slander, rendered the butt of the most biting reproaches and an object of abhorrence to the Community—who declared her unfit to live in the monastery, and condemned her to drag out a most wretched existence—not only felt no resentment, nor was inflamed with indignation against the girl who slandered her, but would not even exculpate herself or give proof of her innocence. And why was this? It was because she fixed her eyes on her own faults which, slight as they were,

she believed deserving of shame, reproach and insult. The thought was ever before her mind that she had sinned, that she must do penance, and this sufficed to keep her heart as gentle as that of a dove, amid so many outrages. Therefore, in times of persecution, of affronts, of injuries, let us follow the advice of St. Gregory; let us fix our eyes on our sins, and upon the grievous chastisements which they deserve; a thought which alone will suffice to calm our irritated spirit, to lay the uprisings of anger, to soothe the appetite for revenge, and to enable us to deal in all meekness with those that have offended us.

CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS CONCERNING THE PRESENT ARTICLE.

483. First suggestion. I have said that meekness is a virtue which regulates anger by the dictates of sound reason. Whence it follows that anger is incompatible with meekness only when it is unreasonable. And therefore Aristotle, speaking of this virtue, says, that every one is meek, in whom anger rises only against those persons who are proper objects of it, and only at fitting times, and in whom it is duly regulated and lasts no longer than is reasonable. Certainly, never to be angry, not even when reason requires, is not the part of a wise man, but of a fool who has no sense or feeling.*

484. St. Basil is of the same mind, and alleges as a proof, the instance of that man of God Moses, who, coming down from Sinai with the Tables of the Law in his hands, and seeing the golden calf, with the censers round it, the slaughtered victims,

* (Ille est mansuetus) qui pro quibus, et quibus, et ut oportet, et cum oportet, et quanto tempore oportet, irascitur. Mansuetus enim perturbatione vacare solet, nulloque duci affectu, quousque ratio præscripserit. Qui vero numquam, etiam cum oportet, irascuntur, fatui esse videntur, quod neque sentire, neque dolere videntur. Ethic. lib. iv., cap. 5.

and all the people in the act of adoring it as their god, was inflamed with a holy indignation, summoned the Levites, and putting himself at their head, dashed like a thunderbolt into the masses of the surprised and unarmed multitude, deluged the camp with blood, and left three-and-twenty thousand dead upon the plain: a slaughter the more awful, as it was wholly unexpected by this stubborn people. Yet this self-same Moses was, as the Sacred Scripture bears witness, the meekest of men.* So that the whole difficulty lies in distinguishing, when anger is, or is not in conformity with right reason, and in discerning when anger is compatible or not with meekness.

485. And here it will be necessary to bear in mind what St. Thomas teaches, that though in its material aspect anger is a heating of the blood in the neighbourhood of the heart, which causes a fervid interior motion; yet inasmuch as it is an act proper to man's nature, it is nothing else than the desire of vengeance, which requires a punishment proportionate to the injury inflicted.† I say that anger is such when it is an act proper to man, because it is possible for us to be angry with things that are incapable of doing us injury, or of being the objects of vengeance; thus it is possible for us to get into a passion with a stone against which we stumble; with a beast which will not go quick enough; with a pen that will not mark; with ink that will not run, and the like. This kind of anger is of the same sort as that of the brutes which, though incapable of willing revenge, are angered and even infuriated when they come across anything that hurts them. In such anger as this, reason has no part or lot; it is but a sort of flame which is kindled both in ourselves and in the brutes, when anything hurtful or annoying presents itself to the fancy. It is not of this brutal anger that I am now treating,—I reserve that for

* Non est alienum ab iis, qui mansuetudini student, animo interdum incitari. Hinc percipi facillime potest, quod Moyses, de quo in sacris literis testatum habemus, mortalium eum omnium mansuetissimum fuisse, ubi ita temporis ratio poscere visa est, vehementissime est indignatus; atque eatenus animi incitatione progressus, ut eam non aliâ ratione, quam suorum cæde terminaverit. In Const. Mon. cap. 15.

† Ira, appetitus vindictæ: hæc enim importat illationem pœnæ infligendæ ad nocumentum sibi illatum. 1, 2, q. 46, Art. 4.

another time. There is another sort of anger in which reason has a part, in so far as it judges a certain action to be injurious and deserving of vengeance; and it is of this anger, which is proper to man as a rational being, that St. Thomas is speaking in the passage quoted above. Of this we shall now treat, for the purpose of showing wherein it may be vicious and thus contrary to meekness; and how, on the other hand, it may be virtuous and compatible with that virtue. The whole of this part of our treatise is grounded on the doctrine of St. Thomas.*

486. Anger, then, taken to mean the appetite of revenge, may be opposed to the dictates of right reason, either as to substance or as to manner. First, it is at variance, as to substance, with the laws laid down by right reason, when vengeance is sought by a private person, to whom it in nowise belongs. *Vengeance is mine*, says the Lord Almighty, and it belongs to such as hold God's place upon earth. To God, and to His vicegerents alone, does it belong to repay and to award to wrong the punishment it calls for.† Secondly, when the vengeance taken by one in authority is not just. Thirdly, when, though just, it is inflicted for motives which reason disapproves. On this point, St. John Chrysostom observes, "That as it is not always cruelty to smite, so it is not always meekness to pardon. The meek man is he who overlooks his personal wrongs, and who (supposing him to have authority) punishes the wrongs done to others. He who goes not by this rule, cannot deserve the name of meek, but should be called stupid, lethargic, and of no more use than a dead man would be."‡

* Cum in homine sit et ratio, et imaginatio, dupliciter in homine potest motus iræ consurgere. Uno modo ex solâ imaginatione nuntiante læsionem: et sic insurgit motus iræ etiam ad res irrationales, et inanimatas, secundum similitudinem illius motûs, qui est in animalibus contra quodlibet nocivum. Alio modo ex ratione nuntiante læsionem. Ibid. q. 45, Art. 7.

† Mihi vindictam, ego retribuam. Rom. xij. 19.

‡ Neque ferire est absolute atrocitatis, neque parcere mansuetudinis: sed mitis ille est, qui ferre potest, quæ in seipsum peccata sunt, qui in aliis factam injuriam propulsat, et eis fert opem. . . . Qui autem hujusmodi non est, sed est hebes, et deses, et somnolentus, et nihil melius mortuo affectus: non est mitis, nec mansuetus. In Psal. cxxxi.

487. We may infer from this, that it is proper to meekness to render us mild and placable; to repress, deaden and extinguish the feelings that incline us to seek to avenge our personal wrongs; and this being the most difficult point is the one to which we have all along exhorted our readers. But this virtue is by no means incompatible with the indignation that induces a person to avenge wrongs done to others, and to portion out just punishment to those over whom he is set: as princes, for example, with respect to their subjects, parents in regard of their children, husbands with their wives, teachers with their scholars. This vengeance, or punishment rather, in order to be conformable to justice and meekness, must not exceed, but must be proportionate to the nature of the fault. Neither should it swerve from the lawful end, by inflicting punishment for the gratification of spite and aversion, but solely for love of justice and zeal for God's outraged honour (as in the case of Moses), or else for the correction of the delinquent.

488. In order that anger may not exceed as to manner, it is requisite that the punishment, which we suppose to be deserved and determined on by one in authority for just and reasonable ends, be not inflicted with excessive passion as regards the interior, nor with any outbursts, whether in extravagant gesture, or in unbecoming and opprobrious words as regards the exterior. The emperor Alexander Severus showed himself wanting in this; for, hearing that a judge had allowed himself to be bribed, his countenance became flushed with fury, and he hastened to put out the eyes of the culprit with his own fingers. This surely was an extravagant way of avenging the wrongs done to others as, without all this rage, he could have committed to his subordinates the task of seeing justice duly satisfied. And we daily see parents, married people, and other people having authority, fail in this; for, when they punish the misdeeds of those under their charge, they break out into curses, vain oaths, and words of contumely, which have nothing to do with correction, but serve merely to vent an irrational and brutish vexation. In a word, briefly to sum up this lengthy dissertation: the meek man is one who shows no resentment; who, in his private capacity, seeks in nowise to avenge the injuries done to him but, if

he holds the office of Superior, resents the transgressions and the wrong done to others, and seeks vengeance, not out of hatred but for righteous ends, without being unduly incensed interiorly, and without betraying want of self-control exteriorly.

489. But the great difficulty of keeping within the bounds of meekness presents itself, when the injured person and the Superior are one and the same, and the offender is subject to his rule as is the case with a prince whose subjects have been guilty of treason, with a father or a husband outraged by his children or his wife : since, in such circumstances, duty demands that they remain not insensible to these injuries, but that they conceive a moderate indignation and take such vengeance as may be reasonable. But, on the other hand, how easy is it for persons so placed to fall into some of the excesses which we have been blaming; to be irritated beyond measure; to break out into words, either profane, unseemly, or unduly reproachful; to require a punishment at once unjust and excessive; and that, too, not from motives of justice and due correction, but from hatred and the satisfaction felt in seeing the guilty party suffer : thus, in manifold ways, contravening the dictates of Christian meekness !

490. To obviate such serious inconveniences, the Director may give to persons so circumstanced the same advice which St. Ambrose gave to the emperor Theodosius.* After having forbidden this emperor the Church, in punishment of the cruel and sanguinary massacre perpetrated by his orders at Thessalonica, and having reconciled him with God and Holy Church by means of a public penance, the great Archbishop advised him to pass a law, ordering that, for the future, no sentence of death pronounced by the emperor should be executed until the expiration of thirty days; to the end that the ebullitions of anger having calmed down, he might have time to weigh in the balance of uprightness and justice, the command which he had given and might never again, through overhaste, give cruel orders, such as had been so fatal to the citizens of Thessalonica. Plutarch relates that similar advice was given by the philosopher Athenadorus to the emperor

* Costerius. In Vitâ S. Ambrosii.

Augustus.* This emperor had asked him for some hints whereby he might be guided aright in the government of his vast empire and, as he was taking his leave, he gave this counsel: "For the future, Cæsar, when thou shalt be stirred up with anger, make no decree, give no command, until thou hast recited to thyself the twenty-five letters of the Greek alphabet." The reason why we should behave with this deliberation, may be found in a letter of St. Gregory to the Consul Leontius. "When you feel irritated," he writes, "check your anger, and delay to another time the infliction of punishment, however justly deserved it may seem to you: lest anger, anticipating reason, hurry it in its wake to some rash determination. On the contrary, reason should take the lead, and anger follow, as her servant and the instrument of her just resolves."†

491. The Director may have dealings with parents (and the same applies to all others invested with authority) who, annoyed and sometimes even offended by unruly children, give way to excessive severity, and break out into profane or opprobrious words; he must insist constantly on their not punishing save after the lapse of an hour, or half a day, or even a whole day and, as is commonly said, in cold blood. They may answer that, when their passion has cooled, the wish to punish passes away along with it, so that they must inflict chastisement then or never. This will give the Director an opportunity of proving to them the necessity of such delays; for if, as they say, their passion and their desire to punish vanish together, it is a plain token that their motive in chastising is not zeal for justice or for the amendment of their children, but only for the purpose of ridding themselves of their bile, or gratifying what is perhaps real hatred, and is plainly opposed to Christian meekness, nor can be excused from sin—frequently, too, from grievous sin. St. Jerome records a beautiful reply, made by Archytas of Tarentum to a fellow-townsman, whose abusive lan-

* In Vitâ August.

† Quoties ira animum invadit, mentem edoma, vince teipsum: differ tempus furoris, et cum tranquilla mens fuerit, quod placet vindica. Ira enim in vindicta malorum sequi debet rationem animi, non præire, ut quasi ancilla justitia post tergum veniat; et non lasciva ante faciem prorumpat. Lib. vij. Epist. 51, ad Leont. Cons.

guage had provoked him to anger: "Were it not that I am in anger, I would beat thee to death;"*—meaning thereby that the offender deserved severe punishment, but that being himself under the influence of anger, it was not a fitting time to inflict it. The Director should inculcate these maxims upon his penitents, to teach them to deal gently with those under their care; without, however, discarding all reasonable indignation.

492. Third suggestion. We pass on now to those transports of anger which have in them something brutish, since reason has no part in them; not even so much as to point out anything which has the shadow of an injury or which calls for punishment; transports stirred up by the imagination of something that hurts or thwarts us, as is the case with the brutes. Thus, for instance, a man gets enraged with his clothes, because they do not sit well upon him; with his tools, because he cannot work with them; with some beast which annoys him. Thus too, in families, the master gets into a passion with the servant, the mistress with the maid; for some involuntary blunder, the result of natural incapacity or of complete inadvertence. Thus again, friends fall out with each other on account of some blameless natural defect which they may perceive in one another. This kind of anger, with that which is provoked merely by some outward inconvenience, not by any wrong done to ourselves or others, is to be put in the same class with the anger of lions, tigers, dogs, bears and bulls, and is diametrically opposed to the gentleness befitting man, more especially the Christian and spiritual man. And hence these ill-humours must be most carefully checked, by quietly putting up with the inconveniences which come upon us without any fault of others. But, as it often happens that this sort of temper is wreaked on those of our household with whom we are in daily intercourse, the Director will take care that his penitents be especially gentle with those of their family, bearing with peace and mildness of heart, all evil inclinations and natural defects.

493. To this end I will propose a memorable instance left on record by Cassian,† which may be used to encourage those who

* Jam te verberibus necâssem, nisi iratus essem. Ep. ad Silv.

† Collat. xviij. cap. 14.

are weak and wanting in this respect. A certain lady of Alexandria, no less illustrious by her virtues than by her birth, asked St. Athanasius to let her have one of the poor widows who were supported on the alms of the Church, not wanting the woman to be her servant so much as a trial of her charity and meekness. One of a mild character and peaceable disposition was sought out, and began to wait upon her mistress with loving attention and with every effort to show her due respect. But the more her character was tractable and pliable, the less was the lady content with her; so she restored her to the Saint, saying that she was indeed a most excellent woman, but not one of the sort she wanted. She then got another a rough, unpolished, sour, cross-grained shrew, of the most troublesome character. Having taken her home, she laid herself out to treat the new-comer with all manner of affectionate attention. But the ill-tempered creature, instead of showing gratitude for the kindness and beneficence of her mistress, responded to it by insults, abuse, reproaches; and sometimes, raising her hands, had the unheard-of insolence to ill-treat her with blows. The saintly lady hereupon called on St. Athanasius, to tender her thanks for having sent her just the person she wanted—that is, a woman of a most disagreeable character, who gave her continual occasions for the practice of meekness and patience.* I am far from implying by this story, that penitents are to be sent to seek out persons of a cross-grained and untractable character, who may put their meekness to the test. This is too rare a height of virtue. It will suffice if the example of this holy lady teach us to bear, with gentleness and compassion, the evil dispositions and natural failings of those with whom we are constrained to live.

494. Fourth suggestion. The Director should remember, that zeal, which prompts us to hinder others from sinning, or to rebuke them when they have fallen into sin, and which excites us against the doers of evil, is also a sort of anger and indignation; though, as was observed above, on the authority of St. Gregory, it is holy, since it springs either from the love of God Whose honour we see trampled under foot, or from the love of our neighbour, whose

* Tandem, iniquit, dedisti mihi, quam repoposceram: nam illa prior suis me potius honorabat et refrigerabat obsequiis.

spiritual loss we wish to prevent or repair. This holy indignation is not contrary to meekness—nay, rather, as St. Gregory says, they are wofully deceived who think that it is right to feel indignation against our own faults but not against those of others; for, if we love our neighbour as ourselves, the same love that stirs up our indignation against ourselves when we go astray, ought to excite within us a holy wrath against others when they fail. It is to this anger of zeal the Royal Prophet exhorts by the words, *Be angry, but sin not.* And because the high-priest Heli was wanting therein, and hence neglected to rebuke his sons, he was made to feel the implacable wrath of divine justice.* But it must be observed, that this indignation, when it springs from genuine zeal, is moderate, because it is under the control of virtue, and so is not troubled bitter, turbulent, impetuous or violent; and if it disturb somewhat the equilibrium of the mind, as in the case of Eliseus, it does not wholly darken it, as does anger when it is sinful and reprehensible.

ARTICLE XI.

On Humility.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL DEFINITION OF HUMILITY AS TO ITS ESSENCE.

495. THE reader must not be surprised if, while tracing the plan of the spiritual edifice on these pages, and adorning it with the most noble of moral virtues, I give the last place to Humility

* Hanc iram quia Heli non habuit, motum contra se implacabiliter supernæ ultionis excitavit: nam quo contra subditorum vitia tepuit, eo contra illum districtio æterni Rectoris exarsit. De hâc irâ per prophetam dicitur: *Irascimini, et nolite peccare:* quod nimirum non recte intelligunt, qui irasci nos nobis tantummodo, non etiam proximis delinquentibus volunt. Si enim sic proximos ut nos amare præcipimur, restat ut sic eorum erratibus, sicut nostris vitiis irascamur. Moral., lib. v. cap. 39.

which, to all appearance, might claim the first, as being the foundation whereon all other virtues rest. For my purpose is not to build up this edifice of perfection, but only to lay before the reader the plan and the design, by adhering to which in his virtuous actions he may attain perfection. And since St. Thomas places humility among the potential parts of the fourth cardinal virtue, that is to say of temperance, I have on that account been forced to speak of it at the close of the present Treatise, in which I have purposed to speak of the cardinal and their principal subordinate moral virtues; these being the proximate predisposition to the perfect love of God and our neighbour, which is the very essence of Christian perfection. But notwithstanding that an orderly arrangement has compelled me to leave this fundamental virtue to the last, the reader must give it his first consideration, in the practical application of my teaching to his own conduct. Because, although in drawing out the plans of a building, we may begin by tracing the walls and then the foundations, yet in the actual erection of it the foundations must be laid before we raise the walls.

496. To proceed then. St. Bernard, speaking of this virtue, distinguishes a twofold humility; which partly consists in the appreciation of the mind, and partly abides in the affection of the will. Through the former component, we know our nothingness and our misery; through the latter, despising ourselves, we trample under foot the empty glory of the world and, after the example of Christ, we go forth to meet ignominy and reproach.* The reader must not run away with the notion that to acquire this humility of self-knowledge it is necessary to imagine evils and miseries within us which have no real existence. Never can true virtue take figments and false ideas as its rule of practice; much less does humility need to ground its truthful, sincere, and holy

* Humilitas duplex est, altera cognitionis, altera affectionis, quæ hic dicitur cordis. Priore cognoscimus, quod nihil sumus: et hanc discimus a nobis ipsis, et ab infirmitate propriâ. Posteriore calcamus gloriam mundi: et hanc ab illo discimus, qui *exinanivit semetipsum, formam servi accipiens*, qui etiam quæsitus in regnum fugit, quæsitus ad tanta probra, et ignominiosum supplicium crucis, sponte obtulit semetipsum. Hom. 4, de Adventu.

acts on such falsehoods and fictions. It suffices that we know ourselves as we really are, and appear in the sight of God, in order to level with the earth the vain and groundless opinion we have formed of ourselves, and to attain that lowly, mean and vile appreciation of self wherein humility of the mind wholly consists. For if this self-knowledge be illumined with a ray from on high so as to show us our true selves, without flattery, we shall discover within ourselves an abyss of nothingness, an ocean of evil and misery, which will force us to exchange the high idea we had formed, for another far less favourable, far less flattering, and immeasurably more lowly.

497. This humble-mindedness being pre-supposed, it gives birth, by a sort of natural consequence, to the affection of humility in the will; that is, to a certain disesteem and contempt for self, and for whatever belongs to self; for though, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, vanity be a different vice from pride, nevertheless, it is the part of humility to trample under foot this sottish and fleeting glory. The reason is obvious. Glory is nothing but the setting forth of our own excellence; vanity, or vainglory, is the pleasure taken in this manifestation, whereby a person confirming himself in the high esteem he has formed of his endowments, feels gratified in contemplating them. Now, let us suppose that a man, by means of this humility of the mind, is intimately convinced that he has none of these gifts or, that if he has, they are not his own but God's; it is certain that he will no longer care to parade them, and still less to confirm himself in the esteem of what he perceives does not belong to him; and hence he will be freed from all hankering after worldly glory. Thus far have we explained, in general terms, that humility of mind and heart which St. Bernard expresses with greater brevity in another part of his writings, where he says: "Humility is a virtue which, by means of a truthful—that is, not false or affected—knowledge of his miseries, makes a man vile in his own estimation."*

498. But St. Thomas, examining this view with scholastic accuracy, though admitting this humble self-knowledge which leads

* Humilitas est virtus, quâ homo verissimâ sui cognitione sibi vilescit. De Grad. Humil.

a man to make no more account of himself than he deserves, will not regard it as the essence of this virtue, but only as an indispensable condition and rule, that we must follow in our self-abasement. According to his view, the essence of humility consists in the inward depression by which the will holds in check the innate yearning which prevails in our hearts, leading us to exalt ourselves far above our deserts. From this lowly feeling there follows a due subjection to God and to our neighbour; also, from it proceed, in turn, as the Saint elsewhere observes, certain outward tokens in our words, bearing and gestures.* To resume briefly the views of these illustrious teachers, it may be said that humility is a virtue which inclines the will to a sincere self-abasement and self-contempt; that it is ruled by the knowledge through which we recognise ourselves to be what we are, and then manifest this knowledge by outward actions.

499. This is what may be said in general of humility. It now remains for us to go into the detail of the particular acts by which a spiritual man may exercise himself in this virtue, both as regards the mind and heart, and also the outward deportment of the body. Before entering into this matter, I will relate an example taken from the Lives of the Fathers, which will illustrate the foregoing doctrine to the life. "For," as St. Bernard says, "example is very effectual to persuade, and causes a lesson to sink deeper into the soul."† A young student, Silvanus by name and by profession a comedian, being inspired from above, went to meet St. Pachomius and, prostrate at his feet, craved of him with many tears to be admitted into his monastery. His prayer was granted. But after taking the holy habit, he fell from his first fervour; for instead of conforming to the rigour of monastic life, he soon

* Humilitas essentialiter in appetitu consistit, secundum quod aliquis refrænat impetum animi sui, ne inordinate tendat in magna; sed regulam habet in cognitione, ut scilicet aliquis non se existimet supra id esse quod est: et utriusque principium et radix, est reverentia quam quis habet ad Deum. Ex interiori autem dispositione humilitatis procedunt quædam exteriora signa in verbis, et factis, et gestibus, quibus id quod intrinsecus latet, manifestetur; sicut et in ceteris virtutibus accidit. 2, 2, q. 161, art. 6.

† Quia exemplum efficacius persuadet, et altius imprimit animo, mitto vos ad sanctum illum senem, etc. De Resur. Serm. 2, Ad Abbates.

returned to his former frivolity, much to the scandal and spiritual prejudice of the weaker brethren, to whom his levity of manner was an example of laxity. The monks were indignant with him on account of his bad behaviour, and frequently urged that he might be expelled from the monastery. The Abbot, however, being full of charity and discretion, could never bring himself to a step which could only have led the thoughtless youth down a precipice. One day he took him aside, and gave him a mild but efficacious and serious rebuke, which wholly changed him from what he had hitherto been. At the words of the holy father, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him,* and he was so mightily penetrated with the Divine Spirit, that he forthwith was pierced to the heart with compunction and mended his evil ways; so that in a short time he who had been the scandal of the monastery, became a mirror of every virtue and an object of admiration to the most aged monks. But the virtue which showed in him to the greatest advantage was a profound humility, making him feel unworthy to be in the company of the other monks, and even of being supported by the ground on which he trod, fearing lest at any moment it might open under his feet, and swallow him up, as befell Core, Dathan, and Abiron. This lowly self-appreciation, joined with a great compunction and contempt of self, ever kept his eyes suffused with tears. Whether he was taking his meals with the brethren or was employed in manual work, his eyes were never dry. Every mark of respect and charitable feeling his brethren showed him was for him a motive for abundant tears; because, as he often said, he thought himself unworthy to brush the very dust off their sandals.

500. After a time, it came to pass that Pachomius, in a public exhortation to his Community, stated that since he had founded that monastery, he had met with only one who was perfect in humility, and he called God and the holy Angels to bear witness to the truth of what he advanced. The Community, amazed at this saying, began to ask themselves who this was that had humbled himself more than all the rest, and had attained a higher perfection than all. Some thought it was Theodore, others Petronius, and others Hosisius, all of them monks of signal virtue But

being unable to satisfy their minds, they earnestly and repeatedly questioned their Abbot. His answer was: "The monk I mentioned to you is that very Silvanus whom you urged me, but a short time since, to expel from the monastery. By his deep humility, he has conquered the devil, has wholly overcome him, and driven him afar. You, brethren, do works of perfection, but you put your trust in your doings. Not so Silvanus. The more victories he wins over the enemy, and the greater his strides towards perfection, the more does he esteem himself inferior to every one, the more unprofitable is he in his own eyes; nay, he even deems himself a castaway."* This is the humility of the mind of which we spoke above. The saintly Abbot continued: "He has tears always in his eyes, because he humbles, lowers, and despises himself; and he has true humility of heart, the mightiest weapon with which to overcome the devil, as he has shown by his amendment."† Here we have the humility of affection, of which we have also just been speaking. Silvanus persevered for eight years in this humble frame of mind, and then died. At the hour of his decease (as Pachomius bears witness), a host of angels came down from heaven to receive his guileless soul, and bore it in triumph to the throne of God, to receive the crown prepared for those who manfully practise humility in all its degrees; in the low esteem formed of themselves in their intellects, in abasement of heart, and in the outward manifestation of both these by their behaviour.

* Vos quidem, fratres, habetis opera justitiæ, et his quæ geritis, gloriose confiditis. Hic autem quanto fortius pugnat, tanto se inferiorem judicat: ex totâ mente, totâque virtute inutilem se, reprobumque pronuntiat.

† Ideoque, denique, et lacrymas habet in promptu, quia se ipsum in imis humiliat et inclinat: diabolum autem nihil reddit ita invalidum, sicut humilitas de corde puro, cui tamen correctionis opera probantur adjuncta.

CHAPTER II.

CERTAIN CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY HELP TO THE ACQUIREMENT OF HUMILITY OF MIND AS TO WHAT WE ARE IN THE ORDER OF NATURE.

501. THE chief consideration which, being frequently pondered in our prayers and ever kept before the mind, will help us to get rid of all vain self-esteem, and leave us impressed with a due notion of our nothingness, is the favourite one of Uviligisus, Archbishop of Mentz, before mentioned—namely, that we should ever call to mind what we were and what we are, first in the order of nature and then in the order of grace.* Let us begin with the former, and think what we were—or better, what we were not—in the past. Let us in thought go over those bygone ages, when we existed not, and imagining those times now so distant, each ask himself, What was I then but a mere nothing? This vast machine of the universe, which by its order and symmetrical arrangement delights my eyes, was then in existence. The stars then shone in the heavens, the planets sparkled, the spheres were in motion, the sun was running its giant course, but what was I? A mere nothing. The mighty globe of the earth, rendered so charming by the alternation of stormy oceans, of verdant plains, of beauteous hills, of wood-clad mountains, already existed. Cities and towns had been built; the inhabitants of which were engaged, some in business, some in trade, some in study, others in handicrafts or in pleasant diversions; some leading a life of toil and trial, others spending their days in ease and pastimes. What was I meanwhile? A mere nothing. And if we shift the scene hundreds of ages back, to the whole of the eternity that has preceded, what was I? A mere nothing. That is, I was less than an ant, than a grain of sand, than an atom of dust; all which are, at least, something. A great truth this, and well suited to humble our proud thoughts, and to bring us to a low esteem of ourselves!

502. The author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus said a great deal

* Memineris quid sis, et quid olim fueris.

when he exclaimed, *Wherefore, dust and ashes, art thou proud?** but he might have said far more, for even to be worthless dust and ashes is, after all, to be something. He would have spoken with more energy had he said: Between dust and ashes, and nothing, there is the infinite chasm that separates being from non-existence; —that is, a boundless distance.† I must then find myself a hiding-place beneath the very dust; I must in my thoughts lower myself beneath the ashes, because I was far less than they throughout eternity, and soon I shall once more be less than these.

503. Nor have I gone too far in advancing that, even now, we are less than a particle of dust; for this is a correct and logical deduction. If we were nothing throughout all past ages, we could not assuredly impart existence to ourselves, and of ourselves emerge into the light of this world. An almighty hand was needed to draw us forth from the bottomless depth of nothing in which we lay unknown, unthought of by all, even by ourselves. It was necessary that the same creating hand that gave us being, should moreover give us all the properties of this being, all the gifts and excellences which adorn it. So that the life which I enjoy comes not from me but from God; my health is not mine, but God's: the talents in which I glory, the birth of which I boast, the sprightliness and charm of manner, the gracefulness and beauty on which I pride myself, are not mine but God's. If, then, I consider what in me I hold from God and what from my own self, I shall find that the account stands thus: I have all from God, from myself nothing. To assert that there is in me a single thing which comes not from God, would be the height of impiety, for it would be equivalent to saying that I have some one thing of which God is not the author. To affirm that in me there is any single thing which I have from myself, would be impious presumption, as it would be to pretend independence of God, at least on this point; to make myself, as it were, a second God. So that, if I have not made shipwreck of the faith or not lost my senses, I must needs own that all in me that is my own is mere nothingness, and that even now I am a mere nothing.

* Quid superbis terra, et cinis? Ecclus. x. 9.
† Quid superbis tu qui nihil es?

504. I may further add, that we stand to God in the same connection as the handiwork of an artisan to him that fashioned it. Nay more, after the sculptor has finished his statue, it stands by itself and needs not to be kept erect by his cunning hand or sturdy arm. Not so with us: after having been created by God, we are still in utmost need of being held up and preserved by His almighty arm, else we should at once disappear into our former nothing. Were the sun to hide its brightness from our earth, and to withhold its genial influences, all the plants would wither, all living things would perish, and the earth would become a dark and loathsome waste. Thus, too, unless God upheld us at every moment by His omnipotent arm, we should fall back into our ancient nothingness. Hence we hold all that we have and are from God, not only because it is His gift, but because He repeats the gift at every instant, and preserves us by the working of a power which yields in nothing to that by which He created us. Wherefore, I may well say with the Apostle, *What hast thou that thou hast not received* at every instant from the open and beneficent hand of God? Nothing else assuredly but the merest nothing!*

505. But hold, I am mistaken; for of a truth there is something in us which we have not received from God, and this something places us in a lower stage of abasement, and makes us viler than even nothing. To us alone belongs guilty sin, whereof God is not the author, but only our own malice and our depraved will. Now it is precisely on account of sin, which is wholly our own work, that we are much more contemptible than on account of the nothingness we may fairly claim as our own; for, as our Lord said of Judas, *It would have been better for that man if he had never been born.*† And this is easily accounted for, because not to exist is something very lowly, but it is not a great evil—nay, it is no evil at all; whereas to have sinned, to be the enemy of God, the object of His hate, and to be doomed to never-ending torments in the pit below, is not only evil, but a great evil, the height of evil, an evil which is, in a certain sense, infinite. Whence, if our native nothingness should inspire us with so low an esteem of ourselves,

* Quid habes quod non accepisti?

† Bonum erat ei, si natus non fuisset homo ille. Matth. xxvj. 24.

sin, which draws all its wickedness from us, should instil into us a most abject and mean notion of what we are. And, if our sins be many and of divers kinds, they should plunge our minds into the depths of a most lowly estimate of ourselves; for, in very deed, every sin that we commit lands us in a state far worse than that of non-existence; so that we are by so much the more vile than nothing, the more we have added sin to sin.

506. What man in the world would not prefer not to exist rather than to be a fiend, the most horrible and execrable being in creation? Yet it is to this that every one who sins mortally degrades himself. For what is hateful in the devils in hell, is not their nature, which is sublime and in nowise different from that of the spirits above; their sin alone mars and deforms them, and renders them abominable beyond measure. Whence it follows that, by sinning, man takes upon himself all that is most horrible in the demons, and degrades himself even below them; for to a nature inferior to theirs he adds that which is most abominable in them.

507. It has pleased God to give a visible proof hereof in the person of a military man, on whose features he allowed a sign to appear of the devilish deformity which his soul had contracted by a deadly sin of which he was guilty. The fact is related by Thomas of Cantipré, in his celebrated book entitled "Bees."* On the return home of the officer, his wife, seeing him with so horrible a countenance, screamed for fright: all the household rushed in, and being terrified in their turn at the sight of so hideous a monster they broke out into cries of terror. The officer then became aware, that through a divine visitation, the fearful repulsiveness of his sin had been stamped upon his frame and features. Filled with compunction, he went to the Church, which was hard by his country-seat, in order to make his Confession, and so to get the grace of God restored to his soul, and the natural features to his body. On his way he chanced to pass by some herds of cattle and flocks of sheep which were being led to pasture, when, at the first glimpse of him, as if a thunderbolt had fallen among them, they scattered on all sides, and the herdsmen taking to flight, left

* Lib. ii. cap. 30, part. 4.

their charge unguarded. On reaching the Church, the Priest who was at the door saying his Office, thinking it was a phantom from below, began to make repeated signs of the Cross on his breast, but finding that the prodigy continued to approach, he rushed into the Church in a fright and closed the door. The wretched man, then prostrate on the threshold and shedding abundance of tears, began to say: "Take pity on me, Father; I am a wretched sinner. Though my sin has made me a devil, yet by nature I am a man like to yourself! Take pity on me; hear my Confession; I am quite prepared for any penance you may judge fit to lay upon me for my sins." At these words the Priest opened the door, confessed and absolved the suppliant. Having thus recovered the grace of God, he returned to his former shape. St. John Chrysostom might then well say that sin is truly demoniacal, since it imprints the form of a demon on all who commit it, be they angels from heaven, or men upon earth.* And this is another most effectual motive for gaining the conviction that we are lower than nothingness itself; because, if a man have ever sinned grievously, (much more, if he have often done so), he has degraded himself to a devilish state; far more vile and contemptible, and assuredly less to be desired, than non-existence.

508. Nor will it avail to say that, though you may have once been in this wretched state, you are now no longer in it: for you have no certainty of this, nor can you be thoroughly certain of it, save by a special revelation of God. You know for certain that you have sinned, but you cannot be sure that this horrible stain has been blotted out of your soul. *Man knows not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.*† And if the Apostle could not be sure that he was in a state of grace, though he had been rapt to the third heaven and allowed to behold the glorious majesty of God, what assurance can we have?‡

509. But, granting that we could be sure of the pardon of our

* Quid dixit Cananæa? *Miserere mei, Domine, quia filia mea male a dæmonio vexatur.* Dicito et tu: Miserere mei, Domine, quia anima mea male a dæmonio vexatur: grandis enim dæmon peccatum est. Ex variis locis in Matth., Homil. 17.

† Nescit homo utrum amore an odio dignus sit. Ecclus. ix. 1.

‡ Nihil mihi conscius sum; sed non in hoc justificatus sum. I ad Cor. iv. 4.

sins, such assurance ought in nowise to diminish the lowly appreciation with which the thought of having once sinned should inspire us. For it will ever hold good, that pardon is simply an effect of the boundless clemency and mercy of God, and that sin is the fruit of our unspeakable wickedness, which our weak powers could never have succeeded in blotting out. So that we may ascribe the doing away with our sin to God, but the guilt of it to ourselves alone. And, as a subject who has plotted against the life of his liege lord, even though his treason has been pardoned, can never appear before his prince without being put to the blush at the thought of his faithlessness; and as the mercy shown to him by his Sovereign serves but to impress him more deeply with the heinousness of his crime, and to increase his shame; so too, the mercy wherewith God deals with us in forgiving our outrages against Him, should pierce us to the quick with the excess of our insolence in offending a God Who makes us thus prove His goodness: since we ought to sink down all the deeper in the acknowledgment of our great unworthiness.

510. Further, not only the sins we have committed, but also those of which we have not been guilty, should inspire us with this low esteem of self. And for this reason: If we fall not at every moment into grievous sin, ay, even into frightful enormities, it is a favour of God Who upholds us by His mighty arm. If it rested only with ourselves, we should most assuredly plunge into all kinds of wickedness. The Prophet Jeremias accounts for this, saying, *The heart of man is perverse above all things, and unsearchable: who can know it?* Our wretched heart is at one time inflamed with anger, solicited by lust, agitated with hate, puffed up with pride, cast down with fear, uplifted with presumption or prostrate with pusillanimity; at another, domineered over by love, led captive by interest, assailed by temptations and exposed to the peril of dangerous occasions. If, then, we yield not to the countless shocks which we receive both from within and without, and if we do not surrender and become guilty of a thousand abominations, we must lay it to the account of a miracle of God's grace which

* Pravum est cor hominum, et inscrutabile: quis cognoscet illud? Jerem. xvij. 9.

upholds us. Remove the grace of God and we shall infallibly fall into countless excesses. So that, if we would appreciate ourselves according to that which is truly our own, we ought to grow vile in our own eyes, even on account of the very sins which we have not committed; for we certainly should have been guilty of them had we been left to ourselves.

511. But, in order to this low appreciation of what we are when left to ourselves, there is no need to recur to the countless grievous sins into which we should assuredly have plunged, on account of the corruption of our nature. We have but to call to mind the many sins into which we daily fall, by the thoughts of the mind, by the affections of the heart, by our words, by the glances of our eyes and by our habitual doings. How many faults against God, against ourneighbours, against ourselves! They are venial, it is true; but then they are continual and exceedingly numerous; they are at times fully voluntary, and imprint upon the soul a certain deformity, peculiar to themselves, though not of that hideous, fiendish kind which is caused by grievous sin in those who go astray. St. Catharine of Genoa, on beholding the hideousness of one venial fault as revealed to her by God in a vision, was reduced to the point of death, and afterwards said that, if the vision had not quickly passed away, her body, even if made of adamant, would have fallen into pieces from sheer abhorrence. Donna Sanchez Carilla, on beholding the deformity brought upon her soul by her venial sins, under the figure of a wan, wasted, repulsive child, covered with the most loathsome vermin, felt agony so great as to make her think that her bones were being dislocated.* He, therefore, who would attain lowly-mindedness, must keep before his eyes the deformity which he contracts at every moment by his daily faults, and thus will keep his thoughts in deep humiliation.

512. To sum up in a few words what has already been stated at full length, it may be observed that, for a whole eternity, we were nothing; that of ourselves we are, even now, nothing; that we are, at the present time, degraded beneath non-existence by the sins which we have committed, and by those which we should

* De Contemp. Cordis, Thom à Kempis, lib. 1, cap. 21.

have committed (so far as it rested with us) had not God upheld us by His powerful grace; lastly, by the faults into which we daily fall. Let the reader form this true and exact notion of himself, ever keeping it graven on his mind, and then let him be puffed up with self-esteem, if he have the heart. He will surely not be able to entertain such a sentiment, for in himself he will find nothing to esteem, but he will perforce be compelled to form a vile and abject estimate of his state; since, as St. Bernard says, he will behold himself compassed all round by the deepest misery, and plunged into an abyss of wretchedness."*

CHAPTER III.

CERTAIN CONSIDERATIONS ON WHAT WE ARE IN THE ORDER OF GRACE, HELPING US TO ACQUIRE A MEAN OPINION OF OURSELVES.

513. But, you may say, if we are so wretched in the natural order, we may, perhaps, be deserving of some esteem in the supernatural order—that is, in the order of grace, which is the loftiest height to which a creature can attain. But it is not so. For the very sublimity of this state shows more plainly our abjection; as, the higher it is, the more are we beyond all proportion with it. I have but to instance any, even the most trifling, holy and meritorious deed—for example, some small alms, or a slight act of patience, for God's sake. Now, if we analyse such an act, we shall find that all its glory belongs to God, and that for us there remains nothing, but abasement. I pass over, for the present, the consideration that, in order to our performing the meritorious deed, it was necessary that God should create us—since that which is itself nothing can do nothing; or again, that He should endow us with rational faculties, such as understanding and will,

* *Repletur*, ait, *multis miseriis:* multis, et multiplicibus, inquam, miseriis corporis, miseriis cordis; miseriis cum dormit, miseriis cum vigilat, miseriis quaquaversum se vertat. Serm. in Fer. IV. Hebd. Pœnosæ.

free and unshackled in their workings; since, without these faculties, free action is impossible: nor do I insist that He must afford us His concourse as Universal Cause, since for all our physical acts, produced by our natural powers, such divine concourse is necessary, as without it no creature can possibly act at all. I omit, as I said, all these reasons, for which such an act is, beyond compare, more the act of God than of ourselves; and I pass on to other reasons which show more obviously the motives for ascribing to God the whole of the honour due to such an act.

514. For an action to be deserving of life everlasting, it is necessary that it be done in a state of grace; that priceless pearl which far surpasses in value earth, heaven, and the whole universe. Because, when sanctifying grace is poured into the soul, it makes us partakers of the very essence of God, renders us His true children, brings us into His familiar friendship, and gives us a real claim to the everlasting possession of His heavenly kingdom. In a word, this supernatural quality it is which bestows upon us a new supernatural being, makes us live a divine life, and renders us, if I may use the expression, so many gods.* Failing this sanctifying grace, our acts may indeed be good and praiseworthy, but they cannot be meritorious; as merit is not measured precisely by the goodness of the act in itself, but rather by the dignity and excellence of the agent. A service rendered by a person in an humble station deserves but a trifling recompense, but if rendered by a king's son, it may merit the reward even of a kingdom. So, too, an action done by a person deprived of sanctifying grace may be deserving of a temporal, but not of an eternal reward; though the same action performed by one who, in virtue of this grace, is son of the King of Heaven, and partaker of the divine nature, is deserving of an everlasting kingdom and of never-ending happiness. Now this sanctifying grace, so indispensable to the meritoriousness of our actions, what is it but the free gift of God, purchased for us with His precious Blood, and bestowed on us when by sin we rendered ourselves wholly undeserving of it?

515. But, further, to perform a meritorious deed, besides

* Ego dixi dii estis, et filii Excelsi omnes. Psal. lxxxj. 6.

sanctifying grace, we stand in need also of the aid of actual grace. It is necessary that God enlighten our minds to know supernatural good, and stir up our will to embrace it; for, although sanctifying grace renders our acts deserving of an everlasting reward, it does not excite the will to their performance. For this purpose certain heavenly lights are needed, and certain inward motions and pious inclinations, which sweetly draw on the will to do good. Now were not these supernatural helps purchased for us by Jesus Christ, at the price of His precious blood? Are they not imparted to us, from time to time, as our needs demand, by His mere goodness? What, then, may you attribute to yourself in any holy and meritorious act which you perform? You may tell me that you give, at least, your co-operation to grace. I reply: True, you freely co-operate with the impulses of divine grace; else, if you were not to take any part in the action, the good work would not be yours, and unless you were to act with full liberty it would not be meritorious; it would be like a bunch of grapes artificially fastened to the branch of the vine, but not produced by it, and which, therefore, could not be called a fruit of the vine. But, if you reflect, this co-operation of yours is the gift of God. First, because if God had not given you His grace, and, before that, the being and powers necessary to act, you had never been able to afford this co-operation. Secondly, had the grace which He vouchsafed not been efficacious, you would indeed have been able to co-operate in the good deed, but you would never have done so. Whence I may repeat my question, What is there in any holy action in which you may justly glory?

516. I will answer for you. Without question you have all the shortcomings and the sinfulness which you mingle with each act; for of such you alone are the author. If you pray, to you belong all distractions, weariness, and languor in the prayer. If you fast, or scourge yourself, or afflict your flesh in any other manner, to you belong, in such penances, the vain self-complacencies, the ostentation, the indiscretion. If you do acts of charity, whether corporal or spiritual, to you belong, in such practices, the movements of impatience, of peevishness, of want of compassion with the shortcomings of others. The same will apply to every act of virtue

which you may perform.* But if it be true that in our every virtuous deed, all the good is from God, and all the evil from ourselves; that to God belongs the honour, to us the confusion and shame; what folly is it in people to believe themselves to be something on account of the good and virtuous deeds which they perform, even granting that these deeds be heroic, and perfect in the highest degree; since even heroic actions should lead us to form a meaner and more humble opinion of ourselves, seeing that whatever good we may do in virtue of divine help, we could not of our own selves do any good act, however trifling!

517. Should it then ever happen that our virtuous actions breed within our mind any returns of self-esteem or of vain self-complacency, our plain duty will be to trample such thoughts under foot; nay more, to reflect that in these acts we can claim nothing but the shortcomings and imperfections found in them, and that the more good we do, the more wretched and worthless we are: nor should we ever stop, until we have formed within ourselves that low opinion which we ought to entertain. It was thus the saintly man acted whom Sulpicius Severus instances in his Dialogues.† This anchoret was endowed with a wondrous virtue of delivering those possessed by the devil. A single word from him sufficed to expel the demon from the bodies of those whom he held in bondage; nay, even the touch of his hair-shirt, or of a crumb that fell from his frugal table, was sufficient to put all hell to flight. The fame of his sanctity being spread on all sides, whole populations flocked to his cell, thronged around him, and thought themselves fortunate indeed, if they could but touch the hem of his garment. But not only this, the governors of provinces, titled nobles, Priests, and even Bishops, waited at his door, to receive a blessing or a touch from his wonder-working hands, looking on themselves as sanctified by the contact. This great esteem in which he was held was increased by his most austere way of living, for he never tasted any strong drink, and lived only on a few wild herbs. Meanwhile the devil, ever on

* Facti sumus ut immundus omnes nos; et quasi pannus menstruatæ universæ justitiæ nostræ. Isai. lxiv. 6.

† Dial. 1, cap. 14.

the watch to work our ruin, stirred up within him a vain esteem of his sanctity, and of the honours which it gained for him. But, as was meet for a true servant of God, he betook himself to trampling under foot this unfounded self-esteem and these uprisings of vanity, reflecting that there was nothing of his own in the miraculous cures and other wondrous actions which he performed, and striving to refer all to God as to the Giver of every best gift. But since the enemy returned again and again with these proud suggestions he could not, in spite of all his endeavours, uproot the evil weed of vanity so as to prevent it perpetually throwing out new shoots. What then did he do? He besought God that the demons whom he had driven from the bodies of others, might come and take possession of himself, and might torment him for the space of five months, in order that he too becoming possessed, all idea of his sanctity might be removed from the minds both of himself and of others. His prayer was granted, and being taken possession of by infernal spirits, he broke out into frenzy, into hideous yells and disorderly gestures, so that it was necessary to bind him with stout ropes, as is commonly done with those whom the devil rouses to furious madness. At length, after five months of this ignominious molestation, he was completely freed from the demon both as to body and soul. We should thus learn from this servant of God, who did so much to efface from his mind all vain self-esteem and to keep himself in due appreciation of his own nothingness, how we also should strive to continue in a lowly opinion of ourselves and to blot out of our minds all self-esteem, especially when it rises on account of the good works in which we claim so small a share.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHAT CONSISTS HUMILITY OF HEART TOWARDS GOD.

518. The first and chief sentiment, says St. Thomas, that should spring from the knowledge which the spiritual man acquires of his

own nothingness, and of that state below even non-existence to which the sins he has committed have reduced him, is a reverent and devout submission to God.* To this lowly and deep subjection of the soul to God does the Prince of the Apostles allude when he says: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.*† Nor will it be difficult for us to put our wills in this attitude of subjection and reverence towards God, if the knowledge of our baseness be deeply rooted in our mind; as it is but too fit that what is nothingness should be subject to him that is All, impotence to Omnipotence, imperfection to the All-Perfect, a wretched creature to Him that is Happiness itself. This was the burden, and very quintessence of that lowly and devout prayer wherein the seraphic patriarch St. Francis found occupation for so many hours together: "My God! what am I? what art Thou?" The Saint plunged himself into the abyss of self-knowledge, of the contemplation of his nothingness, his great misery, his entire dependence on God; whereby his heart was moved to those sentiments of lowly submission, of reverence, of lively confidence in the Almighty, which kept him absorbed in God during the live-long day and night.

519. St. Jerome likewise is of opinion that humility of heart consists in this total subjection of the mind to God.‡ That we may be wholly, and in all things subject to God, the Saint will have us acknowledge God as the Source and Author of all our good, giving all the glory to him alone. He further says, that this submission will insure us against the loss of any of the merits which we may have acquired by our virtuous deeds.§ And well might the holy Doctor speak thus; for, given the case that a person takes a vain self-complacency in any of his excellences or in any of his good deeds, he will no longer ascribe to God that

* Unde humilitas præcipue videtur importare subjectionem hominis ad Deum. . . . Humilitas, sicut dictum est, proprie respicit reverentiam hominis ad Deum. 2, 2, qu. 161, art. 5.

† Humiliamini sub potenti manu Dei. 1 Petr. v. 6.

‡ In eo proprietatem ipsius (humilitatis) definimus, quod per omnia Deo subdimur. Ad Demetr.

§ Nec potest quisquam de meritis suis perdere, quorum causas atque proventus, non in se, sed in auctore suo constituit.

gift or virtuous action, but he will attribute it to himself as something belonging to him, and thus will become vain. Hence, as far as regards that particular gift or endowment, he is not subject to God nor does He pay Him due submission.

520. But here it must be observed, that it is in no way contrary to that humility of the heart which is due to the Sovereign Lord and Maker, for us to acknowledge the good that is in us, even though it be great, and sublime; for, as St. Paul says, *We have received the Spirit Who is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God.** And St. Gregory gives as the reason for this, that otherwise being ignorant of God's gifts, we should be unable to keep them, and we should not take any trouble to preserve and increase them.† The Saint means no more than that when a man knows his own endowments, he should not forget to distinguish between what he has of himself and that which is bestowed by God; so that, attributing all to God, he may not be puffed up with vanity but may remain in his own nothingness, nor allow himself to be moved from the depths of his self-contempt. To do this is in no way at variance with the subjection due to God; on the contrary, God Himself declares, by the prophet Jeremiah, *If thou separate the precious from the vile, then shalt thou be as My mouth.*‡ And again, we read in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, *The greater thou art, humble thyself the more in all things, and thou shalt find favour before God.*§ So that if you may lay claim to nobility of birth, to penetration of mind, to eminence in knowledge, to beauty of feature, to gracefulness of carriage, to rank and dignity, you may, without prejudice to holy humility, admit the fact that you possess these gifts. So you also may be conscious of the favours vouchsafed to you by God in prayer, of the virtues which you practise, of the progress

* Nos autem non spiritum hujus mundi accepimus, sed spiritum qui ex Deo est; ut sciamus, quæ a Deo donata sunt nobis. I. ad Cor. ii. 12.

† Qui magna agit, quamvis de se humilia sentiat, scit tamen magna esse, quæ agit: nam si magna esse nescit, procul dubio minime custodit. Moral. lib. xxvi., cap. 28.

‡ Si separaveris pretiosum a vili, quasi os meum eris. Jerem. xv. 19.

§ Quanto magnus es, humilia te in omnibus et coram Deo invenies gratiam. Ecclus. iii. 20.

which you are continually making in the path of perfection, provided only that you know how to separate the precious portion which is God's gift, from that vile share which is your own, and that you give all the glory to Him Who is the source of whatever good you possess; remaining plunged in the abjection of your own nothingness. Thus did the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse, who, seated on starry thrones, with golden crowns on their heads, cast them before the feet of the Most High, and gave to Him all the praise of their exultation.*

521. To this humility of heart towards God does it belong, not to seek the praise and esteem of men for our good deeds, as was done by the Pharisees, of whom Christ says: *They do all their works to be seen by men.*† Whoever follows in their footsteps gives plain proof that it is not to God that he ascribes what is praiseworthy in his actions, but to himself, practically believing himself the author of them; since he claims for himself, and would withhold from God, the incense of homage and praise: thus giving unmistakable tokens of his falling short of due subjection to his Maker.

522. Nor is it enough not to be on the look-out for honours, or not to seek to hear our own praise; we must further not take pleasure in it when others give us praise; and when, in such occurrences, a guilty self-complacency arises, we are to stifle it forthwith. This, according to St. Augustine, is the more difficult, because such satisfaction or vain self-complacency is an act of proprietorship by which we claim as our own the excellence which attracts honour and applause; whence it becomes plain that in our inmost hearts we are not yet fully subject to the Giver of every best gift.‡

523. Should the spiritual man come to hold honour and praise in abhorrence, to flee both these by every means in his power, and to feel pained and displeased at heart when they are offered him,

* Mittebant coronas suas ante thronum, dicentes: Dignus es, Domine Deus noster, accipere gloriam et honorem. Apoc. iv. 10.

† Omnia opera sua faciunt, ut videantur ab hominibus. Matth. xxiij. 5.

‡ Etsi cuidam facile est laude carere, dum denegatur; difficile est ea non delectari, cum offertur. Epist. 64, Ad Aurel.

as well as to experience no less confusion than is felt by other men under reproach and disgrace, the humility of heart towards God will have reached its highest point. This abhorrence and inward pain are a sure sign that we cannot endure the honour due to God to be given to any creature, and are an unmistakable token that both in knowledge and affection, we have already acquired a perfect and entire submission to our Maker. I am well aware that all cannot attain so lofty an eminence, yet every one should aspire to it and strive after it with all the powers of his soul, since each and every one is bound to render to God all the honour due to Him, by refusing it for himself as not belonging to him.

524. We may be encouraged to aspire to this degree of perfect humility by an example which Cassian has left on record, in his book of "Institutes."* Paphnutius, who, to the monastic profession added the dignity of the priesthood, dwelt in one of the great monasteries of Egypt, venerated by all on account of his dignity and holiness of life. Not one of the monks but admired his singular virtues, and spoke of them in terms of highest praise. But he, being unable to endure these honours and praises, took the most arduous resolution which his humble mind could have conceived. He determined to fly the monastery and go into far-distant lands, where he would be wholly unknown and quite beyond the reach of his brethren. He therefore set out for a monastery in Thebais, and, prostrate at the feet of the Abbot and his Community, demanded the holy habit. Seeing his decrepit old age, his humble garb, his wan, exhausted and languid appearance, they began to laugh at his request. Some said, that after having had his fill of the world, he had come to take shelter in the cloister. Others, that he had not left the world, but rather had been driven out of it by want, and that his object in coming to the monastery was to make sure of a morsel of bread in the last days of his life. Paphnutius was overjoyed at thus seeing his honours changed for scorn, his praises for derision. At length, after many earnest entreaties, he was admitted to the monastery, and sent to work in the garden, under the orders of a young

* Lib. iv. cap. 30, 31.

monk. Here his sole occupation was to dig the ground, to carry manure on his back, and to fulfil the meanest offices of that religious house. After a while, one of the monks who had gone to seek after him on all sides, chanced to enter the garden, noticed him, and thought he recognised him; and secretly drawing nigh, he attentively scanned his features, deportment, and the tone of his voice. At length he discovered that there was the very man he was looking for. He forthwith fell on his knees, and calling him by his name, summoned him on the part of his Abbot to return to his monastery. The other monks marvelled at seeing their guest thus prostrate towards one who, they thought, was only a mere novice. But far greater was their amazement at hearing him called by the name of Paphnutius, famous throughout Egypt for his sanctity. In their turn, they fell at his feet, begged pardon for the bad treatment which he had received at their hands, and alleged as an excuse that they knew not who he was. Paphnutius, meanwhile, weeping bitterly over the misfortune that had befallen him, reproached the devil for having, out of envy of the contentment he felt in this unknown and abject state, discovered him to his companions. He was brought back to the monastery, and there watched with the care that is taken of a jewel that has been lost and is found again. But unable to bear any longer with the high esteen in which all held him, and the veneration with which he was treated by every one, he took to flight a second time; not to a neighbouring country, as he had done at first, but to places where no rumour of his name had ever spread. He crossed the sea, and went over to Palestine, where he made choice of a monastery in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, and there dwelt awhile in the greatest contentment, being wholly unknown. But even here he was discovered by some monks who came to venerate the spot where our Blessed Redeemer was cradled, and by most urgent entreaties and loving violence, was compelled to return to his monastery; thus leaving us a most notable example of the greatest abhorrence of honour and esteem, of homage and of praise.

525. To conclude then: humility of heart towards God, consists not only in the deepest reverence in His sight, but in an entire sub-

mission of soul to Him as to the source of all our good, rendering to Him all the honour, praise, and glory of our every excellence; without keeping back any share of it for ourselves.

CHAPTER V.

ON HUMILITY OF HEART TOWARDS MEN.

526. HUMILITY of heart towards men, consists in despising ourselves (so as to consider that we are inferior to every one), and in submitting to every one. Such is the view taken of it by the Angelic Doctor.* As a consequence of this, the man that is truly humble, bears peacefully with contempt, injury, and insult; he will even rejoice at them. This humility of heart, in regard of our neighbour, takes its rise in humility of mind; for if we realise our own nothingness, our manifold sins, our frailty, imperfection and misery, we shall not find it difficult to believe ourselves to be worse than everybody else.

527. St. John Chrysostom adds, that this submission to every one is to be practised, not merely by sinners plunged in the slough of numerous deadly sins, but even by persons who live virtuously; else their good deeds will avail them nothing. "True humility," he says, "is not that which you cannot help practising, when it is plain and self-evident to you that your neighbour is a hundred-fold better than yourself. True humility consists in putting ourselves beneath those who seem inferior to us, and in paying homage to those who appear less deserving. For if we are right-minded and enlightened by God, we shall consider no one to be inferior to ourselves, but shall rather esteem all men as our superiors in goodness. Nor does this apply only to such as are plunged in countless sins, but also to him who is conscious of doing many good deeds. Such a one must know, that unless he

* 2, 2, quæst. 161, art. 3.

think himself to be the least of all, none of his good works will be of any avail."* The holy Doctor could not speak his mind more plainly, nor lay down more positively, that there can be no true humility of heart without this sincere subjection to every one, whoever he may be.

528. St. Bernard goes further, and with greater emphasis, says: "It is a great evil, and a great prejudice to humility if, in subjecting yourself to all, you prefer yourself to a single one. However much you humble yourself," continues the Saint, "in reckoning yourself to be less than what you really are, you incur no danger in the thought; but if you exalt yourself above what is due to you, and in your heart prefer yourself to a single person whom you esteem your equal or inferior, it is a great evil and an awful danger."† He explains this by a popular comparison, but which is well suited to give clear expression to his view. "Imagine," he says, "that you have to pass under a low gateway, quite out of proportion with your stature. If, in such case, you bend an inch lower than necessary, there is no harm done; you only increase your chance of safety; but, if you bend ever so little less than is needed, you will surely strike your head against the lintel, and bruise your forehead. In like manner, however much you humble yourself before your neighbour, you cannot receive harm; but you will profit by this lowering of yourself; while the least self-preference may work your ruin. Wherefore, O man, whoever thou mayest be, compare thyself neither to those above nor to those beneath thee, to some few or

* Non est enim humilitas, quod facere debes necessitate: hæc, inquam, non est modestiæ, sed debiti. Vera autem modestia est, quando cedimus his, qui nobis videntur esse minores, et eos veneramur, qui nobis videntur esse magis indigni quam nos. Quod si recte sapimus, nullos etiam nobis esse minores arbitrabimur; sed nos excelli ab omnibus hominibus dicemus. Et hoc dico non de nobis, qui innumeris immersi sumus peccatis: sed etiam si quis sibi plurimorum bene gestorum conscius sit. Nisi apud se sentiat, quod omnium sit postremus, nulla ei futura utilitas est ex omnibus suis bonis operibus. Hom. 33, in Genesim.

† Est grande malum horrendumque periculum, si modice plus vero te extollas, si vel uni videlicet in tuâ cognitione te præferas, quem forte pater tibi veritas indicat, aut etiam inferiorem. In Cant. Serm. 37.

to a single person; but be subject to all; think thyself worse than all others."*

529. An objection, however, naturally suggests itself to any one reading this teaching of these holy Fathers. On the one hand, it will be said, it is certain that humility, being one of the most illustrious moral virtues, is wholly grounded on the truth; nor can it borrow its lustre and splendour from falsehood. On the other hand, it is unquestionable that men are not all equal in merit, but that one is better than another, one superior to his fellows. How then, is it possible, that each one should believe himself worse than everybody else, with sincerity, and without danger of giving credit to a falsehood? St. Thomas replies, that each person may consider in himself what he has of himself—that is, his nothingness and sins, which should ever be before him—for he can call nothing else his own. He may further consider in his neighbours, what they have from God; that is to say, their virtues, their gifts of nature and of grace; and he ought ever to bear these in mind, as charity dictates. By means of such a contrast, the haughtiest person must needs bow down and acknowledge his immeasurable inferiority; and that, too, without any danger of falsehood, since in this contrast there are all the features of truth.† He also gives another answer, and says, that if we look upon ourselves as superior to any one in respect of some gift, we are to believe that he excels us by some endowment hidden from us, and, without any pretence, we shall be able to fulfil the precept of the Apostle, who tells us, *In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.*‡ Combining these two answers he repeats in another passage, that we may, apart from all danger of falsehood, think and declare ourselves the vilest of

* Quamobrem noli te, homo, comparare majoribus, noli minoribus, noli aliquibus, noli uni.

† Dicendum, quod si non præferimus id, quod est Dei in proximo, ei quod est proprium in nobis, non possumus incurrere falsitatem. Ibid. art. 3, ad secundum.

‡ In humilitate superiores sibi invicem arbitrantes. Dicit Glossa: Non hoc ita debemus existimare, ut nos æstimare fingamus; sed vere æstimemus esse aliquid occultum in alio, quo nobis superior sit, etiamsi bonum nostrum, quo illo videmur superiores esse, non sit occultum.

all, on account of our own secret sins, of which we are conscious; and on account of God's gifts to others, which are hidden from our gaze.*

530. St. Bernard makes another reply to the objection which we have developed, and alleges another reason why there are none so wicked as that we should esteem ourselves superior to them, or raise ourselves above them in our own opinion. How do you know, he says, that he whom you repute the vilest and most wretched of mankind, whose life you hold in abhorrence as most wicked and sordid and whom, on that account, you reckon inferior, not only to yourself, clothed as you are with the habit of Religion, but also to others whose guilt is not of so deep a dye, how do you know that by the all-powerful workings of God's grace, he may not become better than you, and that he be not already so in the sight of God? Wherefore, you must bow your head even before such a miscreant and believe yourself to be inferior to him; for our Saviour, when He commands us to take the lowest place, means that we should neither prefer, nor even compare, ourselves to others, but be subject to all with genuine humility.† Figure to yourself that, in the golden days of the primitive Church, a Christian of guileless conscience had beheld Saul raging against Christ and His disciples, breathing, in his frenzied hate, prisons, slaughter, bloodshed, for the ruin of the faith. Had such a one preferred himself to the persecutor, and said in his heart: If I fail to serve my Redeemer faithfully, at least I do not persecute Him, nor strive to drag others along with

* Dicendum, quod aliquis absque falsitate potest se credere, et pronuntiare omnibus viliorem secundum defectus occultos, quos in se recognoscit, et dona Dei, quae in aliis latent. Ibid. art. 5, ad 1.

† Quis scit, O homo, si unus ille, quem forte omnium vilissimum atque miserrimum reputas, cujus vitam sceleratissimam, et singulariter fœdissimam horres, et propterea illum putas spernendum, non modo præ te, qui forte jam *sobrie, et juste, et pie vivere* te confidis; sed etiam præ ceteris omnibus sceleratis, tamquam omnium sceleratissimum: quis scit, inquam, si melior et te, et illis, mutatione dexteræ Excelsi in se quidem futurus sit, in Deo vero jam sit? et propterea non mediocrem, non vel penultimum, non ipsum saltem inter novissimos eligere locum non voluit; sed *recumbe*, inquit, *in novissimo loco*, ut solus videlicet omnium novissimus sedeas, teque nemini, non dico præponas, sid nec comparare præsumas. In Cit. Serm. 37.

me to perdition;—he would certainly have been deceived; since he to whom he preferred himself was, even then, in God's sight, a great Apostle, a vessel of election, one of the greatest saints of heaven, with whom any one who despised him could by no means bear comparison. St. Bernard recommends us to make the like supposition every time we meet with a man conspicuous for his wickedness, in order that we may place ourselves ever beneath him and ever keep in the lowest place. This Jesus Christ Himself commands us.

531. To maintain ourselves in this state of self-abasement without any danger of falsehood or self-deception, the remark of the seraphic patriarch St. Francis will be of much avail.* Being asked by his companion how he could, with truth, call himself the greatest sinner in the world, seeing that he had never fallen into any of the crimes which others commit, he replied: "I believe, and hold for certain that, had God dealt with the vilest assassin in the world with the like mercy which He has shown to me, this man would have served Him more faithfully and be more pleasing in His eyes than I now am. Further, it is my firm conviction that if God were to withdraw His holy hand from me, I should fall into enormities beyond anything that has yet been committed." This is a maxim founded on truth, and by the aid of which we may, with all sincerity, regard ourselves as inferior to any sinner whatsoever. For if we but consider what we are of ourselves, we shall be convinced that we should behave worse than any other; so that we ought to think of ourselves as being the vilest of all. In a word, there is no lack of means whereby, without lying or falsehood, we may persuade ourselves that we are the worst of all, placing ourselves, without affectation, and with all sincerity, beneath every one else, provided we be well grounded in self-knowledge which, as we have already observed, is to be the source of this sentiment of subjection to our neighbours.

532. How acceptable this is to God, and how much it helps us onward in perfection, let the great St. Antony declare to us in a wondrous event which he relates happened to himself.† He was

* Chron. S. Franc.—Part I. lib, cap. 68.
† Ex Lib. Sentent. PP. § 121.

in his cell, in high contemplation absorbed in God, when he heard a voice from heaven, saying to him: "Antony, thou hast not yet attained the perfection of a certain tanner living in Alexandria." The man's name was given. On hearing this Antony arose from prayer, took his staff, and with rapid strides set out for the city, wondering within himself how a man living amid the tumult of the world and the bustle of mechanical occupations, could surpass in perfection one who was wholly intent on God's service in the calm of solitude. On reaching the city he began at once to seek out this artizan, and having found him, fell at his feet, beseeching him to discover the good actions which he was in the habit of practising. Amazed at so strange a question, the man replied; "Holy Father, I am not aware of having done any good in my lifetime. Only, in the morning, on rising, I enter into myself, acknowledging that I am the greatest sinner in the city, and with heartfelt sincerity say to God: 'Lord, all who dwell in Alexandria will come at length to enjoy Thee in heaven, in reward of their good deeds, while I alone, as a punishment of my sins, will have to suffer in the bottomless pit.' At night, before lying down, I repeat the same with the like sincerity. I do nothing beyond this."—"And I may truly tell thee," rejoined St. Antony, "that though I lead a solitary life in the desert, I am not yet come to the degree of humility and perfection which thou hast reached, though staying at home." So true is it that a deep humility of sentiment, by which we prefer every one to ourselves, is the short road to a high degree of perfection.

533. But here we must bear in mind the words of the Holy Ghost: *There is one who humbles himself wickedly, but his heart is full of guile.* And wherefore? Because when contemned, mocked, put to scorn, wronged, or outraged by others, such a one changes colour, shows resentment and indignation, and refuses to put up peaceably with these insults. He thus plainly shows that his humility is neither solid nor genuine, but entirely counterfeit; for he who, in his heart, thinks himself viler than his fellows, and far more deserving than they of being looked down upon, is

* Est qui nequiter humiliat se, et interiora ejus plena sunt dolo. Ecclus. xix. 23.

patient when occasions of being despised present themselves, and by his deeds gives proof of the genuineness of his feelings; nay more, if he have made much progress in the perfection of this virtue, he will rejoice at outrages and disgrace, more than the mass of men rejoice at praise and applause. An example of this may be seen in St. Constantine, a Mansionarius of the Church of St. Laurence, at Ancona. St. Gregory the Great tells us that the wide-spread opinion of this man's holiness attracted crowds eager to behold him and to recommend themselves to his prayers. It happened one day that a peasant, who had come to visit him, came into the Church while the Saint was standing on a step-ladder to light the altar-lamps. As he was of low stature and slight build, the churl, measuring the greatness of soul by the size of the body, began to laugh him to scorn, saying: "So this is the fellow that folks call so great a man! To my mind he is but half a man!" On hearing this, the servant of God came down from the steps, embraced the rustic and, kissing him on the cheek, thanked him, saying; "You are the only one who have taken me for what I am."* We may here remark, says St. Gregory, how deeply rooted was the humility of Constantine, who not only showed no resentment, but tenderly embraced the impudent fellow who had so grossly insulted him. He finally concludes, that contumely, mockery, and affronts, are the touch-stone for testing the temper of the humility that each one has in his heart.†

534. But to attain the degree of humility which can stand these tests, we must, besides the knowledge of ourselves, bear in mind our dear Lord so cruelly outraged for our sake; as St. Peter says, *Be ye subject to every human creature for God's sake*—not merely on account of the evil we discover in ourselves, but moreover for the love of that God Who made Himself of no account for our sake.‡ As the great Apostle says, *He emptied*

* Quâ in re, pensandum est, cujus apud se humilitatis fuerit, qui despicientem se rusticum amplius amavit. Dial., lib. 1, cap. 5.

† Qualis enim quisque apud se lateat, contumelia illata probat.

‡ Subjecti estote omni humanæ creaturæ propter Deum. I Petr. ij. 13.

*Himself.** *He was made obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*† With the Royal Psalmist too, may we call to mind, that the Incarnate God became the *reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*, allowing Himself to be trodden under foot, *as a worm and no man.*‡ Remember that He Himself tells us, *I have given you an example, that as I have done, ye may do likewise.*§ What wonder then that the Apostles underwent ignominy with joy and gladness !‖ The reason is that they were inflamed with the love of Jesus Christ.¶ Just so, if in our hearts, in addition to a lowly acknowledgment of our meanness—whereby we deem ourselves more contemptible than others—there be enkindled the love of Christ, and a desire to imitate Him in His abasements, it will be easy for us cheerfully to accept every insult, scorn, wrong, and outrage.

CHAPTER VI.

OUTWARD ACTS OF HUMILITY.

535. St. Thomas, in his explanation of humility, which we set forth in the first Chapter, besides the lowly knowledge of ourselves, which he lays down as a necessary condition for the acquirement of this virtue, and the abasement of the soul before God and our neighbour (in which he makes its essence consist), further requires that it should find expression in outward acts, gestures, and words, which shall both spring from, and render manifest, the inward lowliness of our hearts.** St. Bernard's view

* Exinanivit semetipsum. Philip ii. 7, 8.

† Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.

‡ Ego autem sum vermis, et non homo : opprobrium hominum, et abjectio plebis. Psal. xxj. 7.

§ Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis. Joan. xiij. 15.

‖ Ibant apostoli gaudentes a conspectu concilii. Act. v. 42.

¶ Quia digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati.

** Ex interiori autem dispositione humilitatis procedunt quædam exteriora signa in verbis, et factis, et gestibus, quibus id quod intrinsecus latet, manifestetur. 2, 2, quæst. 161, art 6.

is that these outward humiliations are not only the effect and token of the inner humility of the soul, but that they are even the cause of it, since such acts intensify it; and hence he holds them no less necessary for the acquirement of humility, than is a cause for the production of its effect. Humiliation, says the Saint, is the path that leads to humility, as patience leads to peace, and study to knowledge; if then thou desirest to gain humility, do not withdraw thyself from the way of humiliation. For if thou canst not humble thyself, thou shalt never acquire true humility.* In whatever light, therefore, we consider outward acts of humility, whether as the effects or the causes of inward humility, they are ever most indispensable, if we wish—as it is proper we should—to become humble before God and man. Whence we have briefly to discourse upon these outward acts; and we shall begin with words.

536. As regards words: The humble man will carefully guard himself from saying anything that may redound to his own praise, such as certain hints alluding to the nobility of his birth, the magnificence of his house, his knowledge, genius or talent, his goodness or virtuous works. Because such utterances as these, being full of vain-glory and pride, are too unbecoming in the mouth of a spiritual person. *Never*, says Tobias, *suffer pride to reign in thy mind, nor in thy words.*† So much the more, as such words betray a heart defiled by vanity, according to the Latin and Italian adage, "The tongue presses the aching tooth."‡ Nor will it avail to say that you speak of yourself or of your good deeds, for the sake of example and to edify your neighbours; for though this may from time to time be safely done by persons solidly grounded in humility, it will usually be more expedient for us to hold our tongue, and allow the edification that may

* Humiliatio via est ad humilitatem, sicut patientia ad pacem, sicut lectio ad scientiam. Si virtutem appetis humilitatis, viam non refugias humiliationis. Epist. 17, ad Ogerium Canon.

† Superbiam, numquam in tuo sensu, aut in tuo verbo dominari permittas. Tob. iv. 14.

‡ Ex abundantiâ cordis os loquitur. Matth. xii. 54.

result from our good deeds to be given by the mouth of some one else; as king Solomon counsels us.*

537. We should learn caution from what befell the holy Abbot Eleutherius, the founder of a large monastery in the neighbourhood of Spoleto. St. Gregory tells us† that he was familiarly acquainted with this Abbot at Rome in his own monastery, in which house, too, the Religious breathed his last. The Holy Pope tells us that Eleutherius once raised a dead man to life by the efficacy of his prayers, and procured for him himself a miraculous grace; and he awards him great praise for his simplicity, devoutness, and the remarkable gift of tears with which he was endowed. Now the Saint relates a fact in the life of this great servant of God, which exactly fits in with our present subject. He was once on a journey, and reached about twilight in the evening a convent of nuns, where there was a young boy who was every night tormented by the devil. Having no other shelter, he was obliged to crave a night's lodging from the good nuns. They granted his request, but at the same time begged him to pass the night with this boy. The Abbot agreed. The next morning the nuns inquired whether he had been disturbed during the night by the child, and having heard that he had not, they explained to him the diabolical molestations to which the boy was subject, begging their guest to take him to his monastery in order that, by his prayers and those of his monks, the child might be entirely relieved. He consented, and the boy, after his admission to the monastery, remained wholly unmolested. Now it came to pass that one day Eleutherius, being in the company of his monks said, with a certain vain-glorious exultation, "Brothers, the devil was teasing these good nuns, but since the boy has come to the house of us servants of God, he dares no more come near him."‡ Scarce had he uttered these boastful words, than the devil seized upon the boy and began to torment

* Laudet te alienus, et non os tuum: extraneus, et non labia tua. Prov. xxvij. 2.

† Dial. Lib. iii., cap. 33.

‡ Fratres, diabolus ibi cum illis sororibus jocabatur: at ubi ad servos Dei ventum est, ad hunc puerum accedere non præsumpsit.

him far more furiously than he had ever done before. Eleutherius, aware of his error, commenced to weep bitterly. The monks then falling on their knees, besought God with many tears to have mercy on the possessed child, nor did they rise until they had obtained for him the grace of deliverance. The reader may learn hereby how displeasing to God are words of self-praise, since He would not leave them unpunished in so great a servant of His, but visited them with a chastisement which was quite manifest to all.

538. But it is a small thing not to refrain from vain words. The practice of humility further requires that we should speak to our discredit, especially in discovering to our Confessor or Director, with great sincerity, not only our sins and failings, but all our bad thoughts and evil inclinations. Cassian accounts as a mark of humility,* to discover to others our shortcomings in cases where we see that our confession will be credited, and that confusion will result from it; else it would be better to say nothing: for, if the listeners will not believe us, the self-accusation would turn only to our credit, and there would be danger of our falling into vanity by the very act wherein we seek our humiliation.† But, above all, we should not excuse ourselves when rebuked by others; for, as St. Gregory says, to accuse ourselves of our own failings and not to brook to be accused by others, is not humility, but a subtle pride, against which we should be on our guard.‡

539. In the life of St. Pachomius it is related that, on paying a visit to a monastery, he set himself, after prayer in common, to work with the Community in making baskets. As he was engaged in this manual toil, a young lad chanced to pass by, who, stopping curiously to observe the Saint, boldly said to him,

* Nullas penitus cogitationes, sed confestim, ut exortæ fuerint, eas suo patefacere seniori. Inst., lib. iv. cap. 9.

† Justus prior est accusator sui. Prov. xviij. 17.

‡ Summopere cavendum est, ut mala, quæ fecimus, et sponte fateamur, et hæc aliis arguentibus non negemus. Superbiæ quippe vitium est, ut quod fateri de se quisque, quasi suâ sponte dignatur, hoc sibi dici ab aliis dedignetur. Moral. lib. xxij. 9.

"Father Abbot, that is not the way to make baskets." At these words Pachomius arose, as if the rebuke had come from the Superior of the monastery, and humbly replied, "Pray, show me how they are to be made." The lad showed him the way in which Abbot Theodore was wont to make them, and Pachomius, resuming his seat without once changing colour or being the least ruffled, complied with the directions of his youthful instructor. If, then, one so venerable could receive the correction of a child, though addressed to him indiscreetly, before a whole Community, we, when rebuked for our shortcomings by our equal or superior, should be much more ready to submit with humility to their correction, and to strive to amend them!

540. As regards deeds: Humility may be practised in a twofold manner, by spontaneously doing something that is humiliating, or by cheerfully putting up with whatever of this kind may be done to us by others. As to acts of our own, I do not say that in seeking to level our pride with the dust, we ought to feign madness, as did Simon Salo and St. Philip Neri before the whole people; with numerous others whose heroic self-humiliations are recorded in the annals of the Church. I am well aware that no one should thus humble himself without a special impulse of the spirit of God. Yet seculars may both lawfully and holily humble themselves by frequently visiting the sick in their homes, by waiting upon them in the hospitals, by lowering themselves to acts of humble and abject service; as was done by St. Elizabeth Queen of Portugal, and by St. Margaret Queen of Scotland, both of whom daily fed a large company of beggars, and with their royal hands washed the feet of them all; nor shrank not from bowing down their crowned heads to kiss those poor people, imprinting their lips on their sores and ulcers. Laymen may perform certain actions, holy and obligatory in themselves, which may disgrace them in the eyes of the blind votaries of the world, who are unable to perform this exact idea of virtue. Such was the conduct of holy David who, to give glory to God, danced in the sight of the whole people, before the ark of the Lord, without paying the least attention to the disapprobation manifested by some; in particular, to the scoffing of Michol, a proud and

haughty woman, to whom the holy king replied, *I will rejoice before the Lord. . . . And I will yet be more vile than this, and will be base in mine own sight.** St. Gregory, commenting on this passage, hesitates not to say that he admires David far more when, taking off the royal mantle, he girded himself and danced before the Lord, than when combating with giants and laying them low with the sure aim of his sling. With this sling he conquered his enemies, but by his dancing he overcame himself and made himself vile before God.†

541. To speak now of Religious. These are far better able to make their choice of humiliating actions, whether by exercising mean and lowly offices within the precincts of the cloister, or at times beyond those limits; or by the practice of acts of submission and self-abasement towards other Religious, their brethren, either in the refectory, the choir, or other public places, as is usual in those religious houses wherein virtue flourishes and the spirit of piety reigns. It is related in the Lives of the Fathers,‡ that an aged monk, thinking that he had made great progress in the spiritual path, asked God to show him what more was wanting for him to attain perfection. While thus praying, he heard a voice directing him to a certain swine-herd for an answer to his question. At the same time God had told this hind that, when the solitary came to him, he was to hand him hisst aff and order him to go and mind the pigs. All went on as God had disposed; the solitary went, and received the command. On hearing it, he bowed his head, and set about feeding hogs under the guidance which he received from God by the mouth of the clown. The people, who thought him a saint, seeing him following in the wake of these foul animals, mocked him: some said that his brains were dried up by fasting and prayer and that his mind was gone;

* Quia ludam ante Dominum . . . Et vilior fiam plus quam factus sum: et ero humilis in oculis meis. II. Reg. vj. 21.

† Coram Deo egit vilia, vel extrema; ut illa ex humilitate solidaret, quae coram hominibus gesserat fortia. Quid de ejus factis ab aliis sentiatur, ignoro ego David plus saltantem stupeo, quam pugnantem. Pugnando quippe hostes subdidit; saltando autem coram Deo, se ipsum vicit. Moral., lib. xxvij. cap. 27.

‡ De Obed., n. 21.

others that he was possessed by the devil; but he persevered in this lowly service, and bore with all in peace. At length God, seeing him solidly grounded in humility, ordered him to return to his cell. The Lord would have us learn from this that true humility, which is the foundation of Christian perfection, is to be acquired in base and lowly occupations.

542. Besides these spontaneous humiliations, there are not wanting, both to seculars and Religious, many others that are not sought by them, but which come to them from men, and which are the better fitted to check our self-elation as they are less voluntary. As long as we live in this land of misery there will never be wanting to us either murmurings or slander, injury or contempt. We shall never be without jealous rivals to thwart our advance, or envious adversaries who aim at bringing us down. All these are means of humiliation, not of our seeking but sent by God, to the end that, by embracing them, we may lay low our pride and remain with a vile and humble opinion of ourselves. As the Book of Ecclesiasticus says, *Gold and silver are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.**

543. St. John Climacus relates that he found in a certain monastery, a monk of the name of Abarius, who was made the laughing-stock of the whole Community.† Some insulted him with sharp words; others, when he sat down to meat, would drive him away and send him dinnerless out of the refectory. Climacus being moved to pity for him, took him aside and asked, "Why do your brethren treat you so ill as to drive you from the table, and send you to bed fasting?" "They do it for my good," replied the other, adding: "Father John, they have reason to behave so harshly towards me, for without the trial of such humiliations, the gold of virtue can never gain perfect purity."‡ Climacus says that this good monk had lived fifteen years subject to these outrages, and that he continued the same kind of life two more years after his visit to the monastery. At the point of death, the

* In igne probatur aurum, et argentum: homines vero receptibiles in camino humiliationis. Ecclus. ii. 5.

† De Obedient., Gradu 4.

‡ Pater Joannes: absque probatione non perficitur aurum.

Religious thanked the brethren for their charity in keeping him humble, and calmly breathed his last. After death the Abbot had him interred in a spot set apart for those who had died in odour of sanctity. Happy the man who, like this servant of God, is willing and anxious to learn how to bear calmly with the untoward and humiliating treatment that may come to him from his fellows. He indeed will be grounded on a solid foundation; the edifice of his perfection shall never totter to its fall.

544. Among these humiliating deeds or works, may be reckoned a certain simplicity in our dwelling and furniture and especially in our clothing; for these things being more immediately connected with ourselves, are more efficacious either to humble our hearts, or to puff them up with some sentiment of vanity. St. Basil, writing to St. Gregory the Divine, lays down this rule concerning clothing: We are not to seek gayness of colour, superfineness of texture, or softness. Let the coat be so coarse and thick as that of itself it may suffice, without a second being needed to protect the body from the cold. The shoes should be cheap, but well fitted to the feet, in order to secure ease in walking.* It is certain that the servants of God have ever shown a preference for poor and coarse garments, as proper to keep the soul in humility, and to inspire the heart with sentiments of abasement. We read of the celebrated Arsenius, that while tutor to the two sons of the great Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius, he was splendidly clad. But on becoming a follower of Christ, he learnt in the school of humility another and wholly opposite fashion; since he chose for himself the coarsest and meanest garb that could be found in the solitudes of Scete. St. Gregory relates of St. Equitius, that he was so poorly and meanly clad that his salutation would not have been acknowledged, had he not been known for the holy man he was.† It is told of the two

* Noli quærere neque in colore jucunditatem, neque in structurâ tenuitatem, et mollitiem. . . . Vestis enim crassities tanta esse debet, ut caloris gratiâ opus non habeas alterâ. Calceus vilis quidem pretii, sed tamen satis commode necessitatem expleat.

† Erat valde vilis in vestibus, atque ita despectus, ut si quis illum fortasse nesciret, salutatus etiam resalutare despiceret. Dialog., lib. 1., cap. 4.

saints of the name Macarius, in the Lives of the Fathers,* that going together on a voyage on the Nile, they embarked in a boat in which there were two officers superbly dressed, and surrounded by soldiers and attendants with gold collars and sumptuous liveries. These, beholding the two solitaries in their coarse and lowly garb, were so touched with compunction that one of the number, treading under foot the pomps of the world, became a monk.

545. But we are here concerned with a matter where it is impossible to lay down a general rule applicable to all; for, though each one should practise a certain humility and modesty in his manner of dress, this cannot be the same in every condition. Moderation of dress becoming a Religious is of one kind; another style is suitable for an Ecclesiastic; and another still is seemly in seculars. It can only be said in a general way, that Religious, with regard to the habit of their Order, should behave with simplicity and abhor over nicety or affectation, and that they should cherish their threadbare, rusty, and patched garb, as most suited to holy humility. In a word, they are to take to themselves what we have quoted above from St. Basil, that clerics should not follow seculars in their style and fashion of dress, but keep to that decency and moderation in vesture, which is prescribed by the sacred canons, and diocesan statutes. Seculars, in their turn, should abhor the pomps, the useless adornments, the divers fashions, invented almost daily by the devil as an incentive to vanity, especially to that of women who run mad after these vain adornments of fashion. Show me a woman who has the strength of mind to set her foot on vanity of dress, who cares not to make herself attractive in the sight of others, and, as I said before, she has advanced a great way in the spiritual path.

546. It is recorded in the Annals of the Friars-Minor,† that one of these Religious had for his penitent a lady whose whole mind was occupied with all kinds of brocaded stuffs, jewels, ornaments, and sweet scents. Her Confessor used frequently to

* Lib. de Sign. et Mirac., n. 19.

† Part. 2, lib. iv., cap. 30.

rebuke her, but all in vain. One morning, seeing her at his feet thus decked in all her finery, and all reeking with perfume, being inflamed with a holy zeal, he said, "Madam, all these ornaments you are wearing, are so many snares with which the devil robs Jesus Christ of souls, and enslaves them." Terrified and touched at these awful words, the lady broke forth into this prayer: "Lord, if there be anything in me displeasing in thy sight, and pleasing to the devil Thine enemy, allow him even now to strip me of it violently." Scarce had she said these words, when she fell upon her face, and there appeared a dark shadow, while an invisible hand stripped her of her costly finery, leaving her nothing but her underclothing; and a voice was heard to say to the bystanders: "These are the snares wherewith I entrap souls and make them my own." The lady arose wholly changed from what she had heretofore been; for, adopting a more modest style of dress, she gave herself up to a devout life. Whoever would serve God and not the devil, must do likewise; thus shall he attain holy humility, the foundation of the spiritual life.

547. The third way of practising humility by means of our outward actions, is that which, as St. Thomas says, imposes moderation upon us in our gestures.* This consists in a certain outward composure, indicating the inner humility of the heart. To this may be reduced, not to be easily moved to laughter; to speak in low tones, with moderation and on rational topics; to go with eyes downcast, head bent down, with slow and measured step, acknowledging and making manifest at every moment by this lowly deportment, our sense of our past guilt. St. Benedict expresses all this in three degrees of humility, as included among the twelve which he prescribes for acquiring this virtue.† St. Basil requires humble persons to practise the like actions, as was seen in his letter quoted above. A humble man always goes along with a grave and downcast countenance, a modest deport-

* In dictis, in factis, et gestibus.

† Si non sit facilis risu; si humiliter cum gravitate pauca et rationabilia verba loquatur, et non sit clamosus in voce; si non solum corde, sed etiam corpore humilitatem ubique indicat, inclinato semper capite, et defixis in terram aspectibus, reum se omni horâ de peccatis suis æstimans.

ment, with hair not over solicitously attended to; the garb mean the pace moderate, neither too slow, which would be the token of a soul without energy, nor too fast, the sign of a disturbed and haughty mind.*

548. We may conclude by observing, with St. Jerome and St. Ambrose, that the outward humiliations, of which we have been speaking in this Chapter, must be joined with humility of heart, whereby we acknowledge our vileness and misery; otherwise they would not be acts of humility, but rather sins of vanity and pride covered with the cloak of humility; the more abominable, as they deceive the more by a false appearance. "Follow after humility," says St. Jerome to Celantia, "not after its counterfeit, which is shown merely in the outward deportment and in the tone of the voice; strive for that which springs from the heart. It is one thing to possess the reality, another the shadow, of virtue; one thing to follow after the counterfeit, another to seek the substance, of things. Most hateful is that pride which lurks under the mask of humility."† St. Ambrose is of the like mind. Many, he says, have the appearance but not the virtue of humility; they show it outside but contradict it in their interior. They make parade of it, but with its reality they will have nothing to do. True humility is that which springs, without fraud or deceit, from a sincere heart. Great, then, is its value.‡ Let us therefore endeavour that our humiliations be acts of genuine humility; and,

* Animum humilem consequitur visus subtristis, in terram demissus, habitus neglectus, capillus sparsus, vestis sordida. . . . Incessus esto neque lentus, ut animi dissoluti sit signum; neque cursus celer, et concitatus, ut qui ipsius impetus perturbatos ac temerarios esse demonstret. Cit. Ep. ad Greg.

† Humilitatem sequere, non quæ ostenditur, aut simulatur gestu corporis, aut fractâ voce verborum; sed quæ affectu cordis exprimitur. Aliud est enim virtutem habere, aliud virtutis similitudinem: aliud est rerum umbram sequi, aliud veritatem. Multo deformior illa est superbia, quæ sub quibusdam humilitatis signis latet. Ep. ad Celantiam.

‡ Multi habent humilitatis speciem, sed virtutem non habent. Multi eam foris prætendunt, et intus impugnant. Ad fucum præferunt, ad veritatem abjurant, ad gratiam negant. . . . Non est ergo humilitas, nisi sine fuco, et sine fraude. Ipsa est vera, quæ habet piam mentis sinceritatem; magna virtus ejus. Ep. 44, ad Constant.

to this end, let them spring from sincere lowliness of heart, which is their native soil.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW NECESSARY FOR PERFECTION IS THAT VIRTUE OF HUMILITY WHICH WE HAVE BEEN EXPLAINING IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS.

549. St. Augustine speaks of humility in such terms, with such emphasis, that he appears to set it in the foremost rank among all the virtues that can adorn the soul of a Christian. For writing to Dioscorus, he tells him, that as Demosthenes, that prince of orators, when asked what was the chief of the rules of eloquence, replied "Action," or the mode of pronouncing; and returned the same answer to the question when thrice repeated; so if you inquire of me, Dioscorus, which of the precepts of Christian life is to be chiefly observed, I will always answer, Humility, Humility.* It is obvious to every one, that the holy Doctor, in speaking thus, must be taken to award humility the pre-eminence over every other virtue.

550. St. Thomas, treating this point with the precision of scholastic subtlety,† says that humility is not the most excellent of the virtues; for faith and hope are unquestionably far more noble and charity more illustrious; since these three virtues have God Himself for the immediate object of their acts. The same holy Doctor is further of opinion, that the intellectual virtues, and legal justice, are of a higher dignity in some particular respects; but he concludes, nevertheless, that humility may claim the

* Sicut rhetor ille nobilissmus, cum interrogatus esset, quid ei primum videretur in eloquentiæ præceptis observari oportere, pronunciationem dicitur respondisse: cum quæreretur quid secundo, eamdem pronunciationem; quid tertio, nihil aliud, quam pronunciationem dixisse: sic si interrogares, et quoties interrogares de præceptis Christianæ religionis, nihil aliud responderem, nisi humilitatem. Ep. 56, ad Diosc.

† 2, 2, Quæst. 161, art. 5, in corp.

highest rank in the choir of virtues, by reason of its serving as a foundation to the others.* It is, in truth, the ground and basis of all the rest; and, as in buildings, the foundation must precede the raising of the walls, arches, and columns, even were they made of gold and inlaid with precious stones; so may humility claim the precedence over far loftier virtues, as being the foundation on which they all rest, and whence they derive their elevation. In this sense, he calls humility the first of the virtues. This explanation he has borrowed from St. Augustine, who expresses his own view in the following words: "You are planning to raise a lofty building; look then first to the foundation of humility."† It is in this sense that we may award to humility the primacy amongst all virtues.

551. The other Holy Fathers are of the like mind. "Humility," says St. Cyprian, "was ever the foundation of sanctity. Even in heaven itself, pride and haughtiness tottered and fell. This may be seen in the case of Lucifer, whose nature was as noble as his will was proud and unbending."‡ "In all things," says St. John Chrysostom, "we must proceed with order; hence if we wish to exercise ourselves in good works, let us first lay the foundation of humility, on which the remainder of the building may be securely supported: for there can be no virtue unless accompanied by humility. Whoever has laid this foundation deeply, may raise the edifice of his perfection to whatever height he pleases."§ Such words claim our attention, so full are they of meaning. We should further consider the saying of Cassian, which is to the same purpose: "The structure of virtue can in nowise be raised in the soul, unless the solid foundation of true

* Eod. art. in respons. ad 2.

† Cogitas magnam fabricam constituere celsitudinis? de fundamento prius cogita humilitatis. De Verb. Dom.—Serm. 10.

‡ Fundamentum sanctitatis semper fuit humilitas: nec in cœlo stare potuit superba sublimitas. In Nativ. Dom.

§ Ubique modum servemus, et bonis operibus nostris humilitatem, quasi fundamentum et scabellum substruamus: ut secure virtutes superexstruere valeamus. Virtus enim non est, nisi conjunctam habeat humilitatem. Qui hoc fundamentum recte jecerit, poterit, in quantam voluerit altitudinem, structuram excitare. In Gen.—Hom. 35.

humility have first been laid in the heart; a foundation such as may suffice to bear the loftiest perfection and charity."* St. Bernard asserts the same; saying that the spiritual edifice of Christian perfection cannot stand, unless upheld by the solid foundation of humility.† The other saints are all agreed.

552. This being established, it must be plain to every one how necessary is holy humility in order to make progress in virtue, and to advance in the path of perfection; for, as it would be deemed sheer folly in any one about to build a house, if he were to neglect to excavate the ground in the measure of the intended height of the walls, or if he were to fail to lay a solid foundation (since thus, instead of making a habitation for himself, he would be labouring to bring about his ruin)—so must we likewise esteem him a fool who, desirous of acquiring virtue—nay, less than this, of living a Christian life—does not first plunge deep into the abyss of his nothingness, into the knowledge of his sins and miseries, with an inward and habitual sense of self-abasement; in a word, who does not first lay in his heart the solid foundation of humility: because the spiritual structure of his virtues will never rise, for, like a house built on bad foundations, it will speedily come to the ground.

553. But I will explain my meaning still more clearly in a matter of so great importance, and will unfold the reasons why humility is called the foundation of all the virtues and why it is said to be necessary to their attainment. A foundation has these two properties—first, without it the building cannot be erected; secondly, without it no building can stand. Now, these two properties may be claimed by holy humility, for without it no virtue can be acquired, nor can any virtue be preserved or cultivated. The reason for the first point is thus given by St. Thomas: "Without humility it is impossible to acquire any virtue; because it must be taken for granted that we can attain no super-

* Nullo modo poterit in animâ virtutum structura consurgere, nisi prius jacta fuerint veræ humilitatis in nostro corde fundamenta; quæ firmissime collocata, perfectionis et caritatis culmen valeant sustinere. Instit. lib. xij. 32.

† Nisi super humilitatis stabili fundamento spirituale ædificium stare minime potest. In Cant. Serm. 36.

natural virtue, nor even perform any one of the acts of a virtue, unless the liberal and beneficent hand of God pour forth into our mind and heart a special grace, whereby our faculties are rendered capable of the practice of that virtue. To assert the opposite would be an error of faith. Now it is humility, says the Saint, which frees us from pride, removing the greatest obstacle that can exist to the infusion of the grace which is so much needed for every act of virtue. According to the saying of St. James, *God resists the proud, but gives His grace to the humble.** And so the virtue of humility disposes and prepares the soul for the reception of grace, and thus enables it to practise every other virtue. In this sense, St. Thomas concludes, may humility be called the foundation of the spiritual edifice and the first among the virtues.†

554. St. Cyril of Alexandria, in accordance with St. Thomas, asserts that this mean and lowly esteem of self, with a sincere acknowledgment of our needs and miseries, draws down forthwith the abundance of divine grace and of heavenly aid.‡ St. Gregory agrees with both these writers, saying that humility opens the mind to the light from above, while pride closes it. For it is a kind of secret of the spiritual life, that we are the less able to attain the light of heaven in proportion as we are puffed up; because we are rejected by God for the very reason that we are exalted by pride.§ Hence the Holy Fathers are unanimously agreed that without humility man cannot receive the grace so

* Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam. Jac. iv. 6.

† Humilitas primum locum tenet; in quantum scilicet expellit superbiam, cui Deus resistit, et præbet hominem subditum, et patulum ad suscipiendum influxum divinæ gratiæ, in quantum evacuat inflationem superbiæ. Unde dicitur Jacob, capite quarto, quod *Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam;* et secundum hoc dicitur humilitas spiritualis ædificii fundamentum. Citat. Quæst., a. 4, ad 2.

‡ Hæc plane humilis de se existimatio, et propriæ indigentiæ confessio, divinæ gratiæ largitatem affatim consequitur, et cœleste impetrat auxilium. Lib. vi. in Joan. cap. 21.

§ Lumen intelligentiæ humilitas aperit, superbia abscondit. Nam secretum quoddam pietatis est ut tantum minus ad illud animus perveniat, quanto magis intumescit: quia eo ipso foras repellitur, quo insanius inflatur. Moral., lib. i. cap. 11.

much needed for the practice of virtue, and is therefore unable to acquire any one single virtue.

555. Tell me, I pray, what has a parched, barren valley to do in order to receive the fertilising streams which flow from the mountain-top, and which being parted into several branches distribute their waters over its bosom? Nothing, assuredly, but to bow itself lowly at the foot of the mountain. In like manner, we cannot receive from the bosom of God that fulness of grace which is to render us fruitful in good works and well stocked with virtue, unless we remain bowed down before God, acknowledging with deep humility our misery, our great poverty, and the extremity of our need. And as, if a miserable valley were to strive to raise itself above the summit of the surrounding mountains, it could not receive from them the living waters which fertilise it and cover it with abundant harvests, so, in like manner, that man, who with uplifted head appears before God full of self and puffed up with vanity, cannot expect from the Almighty the dew of those graces which might render him fruitful in every good work.

556. To come now to the second part. The grace of God is necessary, not only to implant virtue within us, but further, for the increase and vigour of the same. Now, if divine grace is withheld from him who is wanting in humility, it strictly follows that, as without it no virtue can be acquired, neither can those virtues be preserved which have been already acquired. St. Jerome gives Celantia clearly to understand this truth: "Set store by nothing so much as by humility, let nothing be dearer to thee; for this is the first and most trusty guardian and keeper of every virtue."* St. Gregory implies the same† when he says, that to set about storing up virtues without humility, is like heaping up dust before a violent wind that will sweep it away. Whoever wishes to save the fire from being extinguished, must cover it up with ashes; and in the same manner, he that would preserve

* Nihil habeas humilitate præstantius, nihil amabilius. Hæc est enim præcipue conservatrix, et quasi custos quædam virtutum omnium.

† Qui sine humilitate virtutes congregat, quasi in ventum pulverem portat. Super Psal. Pœnitent.—In Ps. iij.

virtue must keep it hidden and secured under the mantle of humility.

557. The same holds good of the avoidance of vice, against which no antidote or preservative is so effectual as humility. In order to walk securely in the paths of virtue, without being caught in the snares of sin, the only sure guide is the virtue of humility. God Himself was pleased to reveal this to St. Antony, to whom He showed the world under the figure of a field covered with snares. Terrified at the sight of so many dangers, the Saint asked how one might avoid falling into them. Our Lord replied that it was only by the practice of holy humility.*

558. I remember having read a story of a strange character, but which, I think, may probably be true, since it seems, to my mind, to recall the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, where the former, in spite of his strict observance of the law, was rejected for his pride, while the latter, sinner though he was, won salvation by his humility.† In a certain monastery, there lived a saintly monk, to whom God was frequently pleased to make known His secrets, and who was on that account held in high esteem by his brethren. It happened that a hermit, who led a solitary life in a forest not far from the monastery, being sick unto death, begged the Abbot to come and administer to him the last sacraments. The Abbot hastened at once to the dying man, bearing with him the Holy Eucharist, and taking, for companion and attendant in the sacred function, the monk so highly favoured by God. In the neighbourhood their lurked a brigand, who was in the habit of lying in wait for the lives and purses of travellers. On hearing the tinkling of the bell that preceded the Blessed Eucharist, he was troubled, feeling an unusual devotion, and turning round, accompanied the Priest to the cell of the dying hermit. On reaching it, he began to reflect on his former wicked life, and thought himself unworthy to enter the room or to tread the ground on which the servant of God had spent so many years. Kneeling, therefore, on the threshold, he exclaimed

* S. Athan. In vitâ S. Anton.

† Specul. Exemp.—Dist. 9, Exemp. 199.

with sighs: "Would that I were in your place!" On hearing him, the dying man conceived sentiments of the haughtiest self-esteem, and repeated in his heart: "It would indeed be well for you to be what I am." At the very instant, he breathed his last. The monk, who had accompanied the Abbot, burst into sobs and tears. When all was over, the Abbot and his companion returned to their monastery. The robber, meanwhile, remaining on his knees as before, was penetrated with so intense a contrition in his inmost heart, that he wept bitterly for his past offences and promised God an entire amendment of life. Unable at length to bear up against the poignancy of his sorrow he arose, and went with hurried steps to the Abbot, in order to relieve himself of the burden of his sin by a full Confession. But as the light from heaven, which enlightened his mind to acknowledge (as was most due) his evil course, had—perhaps—dimmed somewhat his bodily vision, he stumbled in his hurry, fell down a precipice and was wounded in a vital part. The monk, who was accompanying the Abbot, being at no great distance, seeing this sudden death, began to smile cheerfully. On their return home, the Abbot charged the monk to account for his having wept at the decease of the good old hermit, while he had laughed for joy at the sudden death of a brigand, who was following in their wake for the purpose of depriving them of their property and perhaps of their life. He answered, that God had made known to him that the hermit was damned for the proud thoughts to which he had consented at the moment of death, while the robber had been carried by Angels into paradise, having been purified and freed both from the guilt and punishment of his misdeeds by his extraordinary contrition.

559. By this, or rather by the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, of which the above story has always seemed to me a lively figure, the reader may perceive how true it is that no single virtue, nor even any degree of holiness itself, is secure unless it be grounded on sincere humility; and that the blackest guilt, if joined to a deep humility, is soon changed into true sanctity. Thus is it necessary to be humble in order to attain salvation; and to be perfect when we die, we must be deeply

and perfectly humble. This is the word of Christ; no more is needed.*

560. As we began this Chapter with the words of St. Augustine, let us quote him now that we conclude. The sure road that leads to God, without danger of being led astray, according to what he says to Dioscorus, is—first, humility; next, humility; lastly, humility. "Ask me," he writes, "the question as often as you please, and my answer will ever be the same. Not that there are no other precepts in God's law, but because, unless humility both precede and follow our good works, and also accompany them—unless we keep it ever before our eyes, unless we hold fast to it in order to repress pride and all vain self-conceit—our good deeds will be snatched out of our hands. We have reason to dread other vices when we do wrong; pride lurks even in our good actions, and must be guarded against lest it rob us of the merit which we acquire by them."† This is to say that, without humility there can be no virtuous, holy, and meritorious work; and consequently that without humility there can be no virtue. We may hence see how necessary is humility for a spiritual man, since without it we cannot advance a single step in the path of perfection. We now pass to the practice of all that we have so far been saying.

* Nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum. Qui se exaltaverit humiliabitur: et qui se humiliaverit exaltabitur. Matth. xviij. 13; Idem. xxiij. 12.

† Ea est, prima humilitas, secunda humilitas, tertia humilitas, et quoties interrogares, hoc dicerem: non quod alia non sint præcepta, quæ dicantur: sed nisi humilitas omnia, quæcumque bene fecerimus, et præcesserit, et comitetur, et consecuta fuerit: et proposita, quam intueamur, et opposita, cui adhæreamus, et imposita, quæ reprimamus; jam nobis de aliquo bono facto gaudentibus, totum extorquet de manu superbia: vitia quippe cetera, in peccatis, superbia vero in recte factis, timenda est, ne illa quæ laudabiliter facta sunt, ipsius laudis cupiditate amittantur. Epist. Supracit. 58 ad Dioscorum.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE FOREGOING DOCTRINE.

561. First suggestion. From what we have said in the preceding Chapter, it follows that the first and principal care of a Director must be to lay in the souls of his penitents a solid foundation of the virtue of holy humility; for otherwise he will lose his trouble, and they will lose all the pains that they take to advance in virtue. To strive after a spiritual life, and not to strive after humility, is to build upon the sand. Now to proceed with order in a matter of such importance, the Director must begin by rooting in the minds of his penitents the humility which consists in self-knowledge; this being the first stone that has to be laid in order to make a solid foundation of humility. But it must be observed that for this purpose, it is not enough to have a mere abstract knowledge, whereby the penitent believes, in a general and indistinct manner, that he is nothing but a sinner and miserable wretch, as faith teaches: since this superficial knowledge can go along very well with a pride that is perfectly diabolical. It must of necessity be a lively, deep, and practical realisation of our abasement, which begets in the soul a despising of ourselves before God and man: for in this holy sentiment it is, according to the view of St. Thomas, that humility formally consists. But as no virtue, and even no art, can be acquired without frequent practice, the Director will train all who are desirous of progress, to the frequent practice of considering these truths and keeping them constantly before their minds to their dying day.

562. For this purpose he will prescribe to them to meditate for some time on self-knowledge, and will set before them suitable considerations. When he finds them sufficiently advanced, he will teach them to mingle lowly views of themselves with all their thoughts, as bread is taken along with all other kinds of food. I will explain my meaning: Placing themselves in the

presence of God they must, while they consider His greatness, at the same time, reflect upon their own nothingness, their sins, and unworthiness; when making acts of adoration and homage, they must join to them acts of deep humility. When purposing the amendment of some fault, the practice of some virtue, they must recall their bygone shortcomings, and must mingle with these resolves acts of inward shame and confusion. When begging of God some virtue or other spiritual gift, they must consider that, of themselves, they are incapable of attaining it and that they deserve not to receive it from God; yet for their trust in His infinite goodness, they must implore it with fervour: thus will they join lowly self-knowledge with fervent prayer. In making acts of contrition for their past sins, let them ponder their own weakness; and so with sorrow of heart, they will couple humility of soul. In this wise, by continual exercise, they will attain a deep and habitual knowledge of their own misery, and will be rooted therein.

563. But here it must be remarked, that this self-knowledge, in order to engender humility, must be illumined by a ray from above which may enable us to penetrate to the very depths of the abyss of our miseries. If this fails, although we ground ourselves in this knowledge, by the use of various reflections frequently renewed, it will not avail to humble our haughty soul and proud heart. The same happens here as commonly happens in connection with other devout considerations. Yesterday, for instance, when you were meditating on the Passion of our Lord and His ghastly wounds, His copious blood-shedding failed to excite within you the least feeling of pity for your suffering Saviour. You meditate to-day on the same subject, and you melt into tears of compassion. How is this? It is because to-day you have that clear light which failed you yesterday; the light in the presence of which the sufferings of Christ make upon you a tender and sorrowful impression. Thus too, if to the knowledge which you strive to gain of your sins, God join a ray of His light, you will, in very deed, esteem yourself the greatest sinner in the world and annihilate yourself in His sight, just as St. Francis of Assisi, on the testimony of St. Bonaventure: or as St.

Catharine of Sienna, on the testimony of Blessed Raymond: and as the Apostle St. Paul looked on himself as the greatest of sinners, according to his own testimony.* If this light fail us, our miseries will vanish from our sight, and however much we may strive, we shall never come to know ourselves to be the wretched creatures that we really are in God's eyes. But how is this light to be obtained? The only way is to ask for it with that truthful persevering prayer to which nothing is ever refused Hence the Director must frequently remind penitents who are desirous of acquiring humility, to be constantly begging of God this humbling light, which, united to their own strivings after self-knowledge, may enable them to become lowly and, in the depths of their heart, to account themselves as nothing.

564. I have said that the Director must keep his penitents to this practice unto their dying day, for it is a practice from which no one is at liberty to claim exemption. Certain persons, in whom perfect love is beginning to be enkindled, may lay aside such meditations as are calculated to excite fear, for instance, those on death, hell, judgment, &c.; for, perfect love drives out servile fear, as St. John teaches.† But from the study of self no one can be considered free; nay, the most lofty souls need it more than the others. And so, even if your penitents have attained to the perfect and mystic union of love, to ecstasy and raptures; even if they have, like the Apostle, been snatched up to the third heaven, they will more than ever stand in need of keeping their eyes fixed on their own nothingness, their sins and inborn weakness; for he whom God has raised highest is most liable to the dizziness of those vain thoughts which make men fall into the abyss. So that all have need to keep themselves humble.

565. Second suggestion. Humility of sentiment must follow on that of self-knowledge, as it is the very essence and sap, so to speak, of this virtue. But before coming to the practical details of this so salutary sentiment, I must warn the Director to be watchful and far-sighted in distinguishing between it and its

* Christus Jesus venit in hunc mundum peccatores salvos facere, quorum primus ego sum. I. ad Tim. i. 15.

† Perfecta charitas foras mittit timorem. I. Joan. iv. 18.

counterfeit, which is deluding and hurtful. He will often meet with spiritual persons, desirous of making progress who, when they chance to fall into the sins or shortcomings into which they have frequently resolved not to fall, get troubled and disquieted even to the point of losing peace of soul: and, close upon this disquiet, follows a sort of misgiving that they will never succeed better. "We see," each says within himself, "that perfection is not meant for me. I recommend myself to God, but I do not deserve to be heard on account of my sins." Whence they fall into a certain torpor of spirit, and care not, or neglect, to do good. All this is mistaken by them for humility, as it is based on a knowledge of their own weakness, and on this account they do not resist the temptation; but it is, in very deed, pusillanimity, littleness of soul, a faint-heartedness founded on a subtle pride. Do you know why these persons are disquieted after their sin? It is because they had conceived the vain notion that they were very strong, and secure against ever falling again, so that when they find their dream rudely dispelled, no wonder that they become a prey to trouble and bitterness of heart. They lose hope, since they had confidence in themselves, and in their power of ridding themselves of their faults by their own efforts. But being taught by experience how weak was the stay on which they were leaning, no wonder that they fall into despondency and pusillanimity. The Director may see by this, how wofully these souls are led astray by the delusions of a false humility, and in what need they stand of care and watchfulness.

566. He who is really humble will not be surprised or disturbed after having fallen into sin: for being grounded in the sense of his weakness, he knows that the evil soil of his heart is capable of producing nothing but these evil weeds. He repents, indeed, yet not so much for the harm he has done to himself as for the offence he has given to God; and in the meantime he calmly humbles himself saying, as St. Catharine of Genoa used to say in such cases, "These are the fruits that my garden produces. Unless Thou, O Lord, keep me up by Thine almighty arm, I shall commit other sins, nor is there any crime into which I shall not speedily plunge." The really humble will not yield to

despondency, but will cast himself into the arms of the divine goodness, and will repeat with a dilated heart: "I steadfastly hope to do with Thy gracious help what I cannot do of my own weakness." Thus, from his very faults, does he gain courage to go on more speedily in the race of perfection. Let us listen to that great teacher of the spiritual life, St. Teresa, who, treating of this point, says:* "True humility, though it discovers to the soul its native deformity and pains us by showing us ourselves, is never accompanied by disturbance, never disquiets the heart nor overcasts the mind, never occasions dryness, but is always a source of comfort. On the one hand it inspires sorrow for having offended God, while on the other it expands the heart with the sure hope of His mercy; its light enables us to feel confounded at ourselves and yet to praise God for having borne with us. But in the counterfeit humility, which is inspired by the devil, there is no light for good; God is shown as one who puts all to fire and sword. This is the most cruel, subtle and deceitful delusion of the devil's craft I have ever known." The Director must then seek light to correct these sentiments of false humility, which spring from pride or from the delusion of the demon, or more usually from both; and he must be earnest in freeing his penitents from them.

567. Third suggestion. The sentiment of that true and supernatural humility, which is a gift of God, consists in the low estimate of self which we form at the sight of our nothingness, sins and miseries; leading us quietly and calmly to subject ourselves to God first, and then to every human creature: as we have explained in the foregoing Chapters. We will now examine how this subjection is to be practised, first with regard to God. The person, placing himself in the divine presence with the eye of faith, will cast one glance at the infinite majesty of the Almighty and another glance at his own miseries; at the contrast of his deep abasement with God's immeasurable greatness, he will subject, prostrate, annihilate himself before the Lord, in the measure of the light imparted from above. St. Ignatius Loyola would have us

* In her Life, Chap. 36.

contemplate ourselves, in the sight of God, as a running sore that lets out matter on all sides. St. Vincent Ferrer would have us account ourselves as putrid carrion and hideous corpses, on account of our enormous sins, in order that we may conceive a great and lively contempt of ourselves, and may wonder how God can bring Himself to love anything so abominable as we are. Secondly, we must confess, with the most intimate conviction of our hearts, that whatever good may be in us, is not our own but God's; that to Him is due all the glory, honour and praise; that we can claim nothing as our own but our nothingness, or what is still more vile, the filth of our sins. Thirdly, we must inwardly rejoice that we are nothing, in order that God alone may be all in all—that we have no power, in order that He alone may be all mighty—that we are destitute of all good, in order that He alone may be the sole, the supreme Good. Fourthly, we must repent of having, by a barefaced theft, robbed God of His most precious possession external to Himself, namely His glory, by being puffed up at some gift or excellency which we possess and by accepting for ourselves the praise which was His due and not our own; and, at the same time, we must restore to God the honour of which we have robbed Him, by saying, with all fulness of heart, *To Thee alone be honour and glory.* Fifthly, we should further restore to Him all the glory of which the proud and vain have robbed Him, declaring that it should have been given to Him, as to the source of all our good and as to our last end, to Whom, in justice, it should return. Sixthly, we ought to marvel that, while the angels and saints of heaven account themselves as nothing before God, being fully aware of their utter poverty, we alone dare to take pride in ourselves. Seventhly, let us fear lest God withdraw the gifts which He has bestowed upon us, or allow us to misuse them unto our deeper perdition. Eighthly, let us, above all, conceive a firm and constant resolution never to seek for ourselves honour, esteem or praise, and to do what in us lies to avoid all that may gain such for us; as, for example, dignities, position, important and honourable functions. St. Bernard says most truly, that it is an execrable presumption to seek glory in what belongs not to us, and while aware that we have nothing of ourselves, to attempt to rob another

of his honour.* And a little further on, he adds, that it is a grievous crime to indulge the pride with which we make use of gifts bestowed upon us, as if they were entirely our own and sprang from ourselves; thus usurping the glory which belongs to the Giver.†

568. Fourth suggestion. Humility of heart in regard of our neighbour has three degrees, as we observed in the fifth Chapter; the practical view of which I will now briefly unfold. First, to despise ourselves, in such manner as to place ourselves below every one, thinking each person with whom we are thrown to be superior to ourselves. This submission must be in the *mind*, so that we make more account of the opinion of another than of our own. Hence we must never defend our own views with obstinacy, but having given our reasons, we must yield and submit. We must further seek the advice of others and follow it, as being safer than our own opinion; and above all, we must never yield to displeasure at seeing the views of others preferred to ours, being disposed to look upon our opinion as less solidly grounded. As regards the *will*, this subjection should make us submit our will to that of God and of those set over us, and even of others who have not authority over us; as it is but reasonable that our will, of which we should make less account, should yield to that of our neighbour, which we should esteem as far more worthy to be followed. As regards *outward works*, we are to be content that what we do is not valued, and is thought less of than the actions of others.

569. The second degree of humility of heart as regards our neighbours, is so to despise ourselves that we bear with calmness the contempt of others, and in consequence of the low estimate we form of ourselves, to say in our hearts, "He is right, He does me justice, he treats me as I deserve. The view he takes of my worth agrees with that of God and the whole court of heaven. In God's sight I am most vile on account of my nothingness,

* Declinanda, et execranda illa præsumptio est, qua sciens, et prudens forte audeas, de bonis non tuis tuam quærere gloriam: et quod certus es a te non esse, inde tamen alterius rapere non verearis honorem.

† Est quippe superbia, et delictum maximum uti datis tamquam innatis, et in acceptis beneficiis gloriam usurpare beneficii. De Diligendo Deo.

abominable for my sins." In this degree, we still savour the bitterness of being contemned, but it is overcome by the contempt which we feel for ourselves, which makes us turn to God, saying, "I thank thee, Lord, that there are those who know me and treat me as the wretch I am;" and we should put constraint upon ourselves to pray for the person who has outraged us. We must strive to attain this degree; otherwise, as St. Gregory observes, the contempt that we may seem to feel for ourselves, when we own and declare our sinfulness, would not be true humility, or real contempt: as we saw in the fifth Chapter. "We know plenty of persons, says the Saint, "who, of their own movement, confess that they are sinners, but who, when they are rebuked for their faults, put themselves at once on the defensive. If these people acknowledged their sinfulness with real humility, and in consequence, truly despised themselves, they would not recall their own spontaneous confession but would endure reproach peacefully.*

570. The third degree of humility consists in so despising ourselves, that we rejoice at being made little of by others. This is indeed a lofty and arduous height, but yet may we reach it, and we should aspire to do this by the grace of God. St. Diodorus distinguishes two sorts of humility: one proper to proficients, the other to the perfect.† The former feel pain and sadness under humiliation, because they have not yet subdued the perverse inclination of nature: the latter, on the contrary, are filled with joy, having so completely overcome their passions that these dare not raise their heads to renew the struggle. Whatever our state, we must do violence to ourselves in order to receive contentedly scorn, affronts, and insults; saying, in the will at least, even if our feelings make resistance: "Now, indeed, dear Jesus, am I become like unto Thee, Who wert so much despised for love of me. These outrages, persecutions, and

* Multos novimos, qui arguente nullo, peccatores se esse confitentur: cum vero de culpâ suâ fuerint fortasse correpti, defensionis patrocinium quærunt, ne peccatores esse videantur. Qui si tunc, cum id sponte dicunt, peccatores se esse veraci humilitate cognoscerent, cum arguuntur ab aliis, esse se quod confessi fuerant, non negarent. Moral., lib. xxii. cap. 10.

† Una modicorum, altera perfectorum. De Perf. Spir. cap. 95.

slanders, though so repugnant in outward seeming, are the happiness, the blessedness, which Thou hast promised Thy servants.* They are an earnest of the incorruptible, unspeakably great blessings which Thou art keeping in store for me above.† It is right, then, that I should rejoice and be glad at receiving them.' Thus will love for our Saviour, and the hope of eternal bliss, assuage the bitterness which our frail nature cannot but feel under humiliation, and perhaps even change it into a spiritual joy. Such are the practical methods for exercising ourselves in humility, which Directors should gradually bring their penitents to adopt, according to the disposition of each and the greater or lesser degree of progress which they may discover. As regards external humiliation, consisting in words, deeds, and gestures, I will add nothing, having sufficiently treated of the practice regarding these in the sixth Chapter.

* Beati estis cum maledixerint vobis et persecuti vos fuerint, et dixerint omne malum adversum vos, mentientes, propter me. Matth. v. 11.

† Gaudete, et exultate, quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in cœlis. Ibid.

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